REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION

TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

CORRECTED

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Wednesday 17 August 2022

The Committee met at 10:45.

PRESENT

The Hon. Scott Farlow (Acting Chair)

Ms Abigail Boyd
The Hon. Courtney Houssos
The Hon. Aileen MacDonald

PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

The Hon. Scott Barrett
The Hon. Anthony D'Adam
The Hon. Mark Latham

* Please note:
[inaudible] is used when audio words cannot be deciphered.
[audio malfunction] is used when words are lost due to a technical malfunction.
[disorder] is used when members or witnesses speak over one another.

CORRECTED

The ACTING CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. My name's Scott Farlow. I am Acting Chair today as our Chair, Mark Latham, is joining us online. I welcome everyone to the third public hearing of Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education's inquiry into teacher shortages in New South Wales. I acknowledge today the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today.

Today we will be hearing from a number of witnesses, including representatives of the PSA and various parents and citizens associations. We'll also hear from the New South Wales Education Standards Authority as well as Professor John Hattie from the University of Melbourne's School of Education. While we have many witnesses with us in person, some will be appearing today via videoconference as well as will two of our Committee members, both Mr Latham and Mr D'Adam. I thank everyone for making the time to give evidence to this important inquiry today.

Before we commence, I make some brief comments about the procedures for today's meeting. Today's hearing is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. A transcript will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, media representatives are reminded that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. While parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses giving evidence today, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of their evidence at the hearing. I therefore urge witnesses to be careful about comments they may make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence.

Committee hearings are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections about others under the protection of parliamentary privilege. In that regard, it is important that witnesses focus on the issues raised by the inquiry's terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily. All witnesses have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. If witnesses are unable to answer a question today and want more time to respond, they can take a question on notice. Written answers to questions taken on notice are to be provided within 21 days of receipt. If witnesses wish to hand up documents, they should do so through the Committee staff or for those witnesses appearing via Webex today, by emailing them to the secretariat.

In terms of the audibility of the hearing today, I remind both Committee members and witnesses to speak into the microphones. For witnesses appearing remotely, please ensure your microphone is muted when you are not speaking—the same for Committee members. As we have a number of witnesses in person and via videoconference, it may be helpful to identify who questions are directed to and who is speaking. For those with hearing difficulties who are present in the room today, please note that the room is fitted with induction loops compatible with hearing aid systems that have tele-coil receivers. Finally, could everyone please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing.

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Mr DYLAN SMITH, Manager – Industrial Support, Public Service Association, affirmed and examined

Dr ANDY ASQUITH, Research Officer, Public Service Association, affirmed and examined

The ACTING CHAIR: I now take the opportunity to welcome our first witnesses. Would either of you like to make a short opening statement for the Committee?

DYLAN SMITH: Thank you, Chair, and the honourable members of the Committee. As stated, I am the manager of industrial support, but I should note that until recently I was also acting manager of our schools team and it's in that capacity that I appear today. The Public Service Association is the union of public servants in this State, with around 40,000 members across all agencies and areas of State responsibility. Over 9,000 of those members work directly for the Department of Education both within schools, the schools' networks and within the department's corporate structure. We thank you for the opportunity to provide our evidence today.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry, which in reality for us is about the future of all current and future students within the New South Wales school system. We note, however, that the inquiry's terms of reference were limited to one aspect of the New South Wales school system, being teachers. We wish to talk about the way that we interact with that classification of people today and about some of the concerns that we have. Whilst we acknowledge that there is indeed a teacher shortage and support the submissions of the NSW Teachers Federation broadly, it is our position that the staffing crisis is much wider and includes school staff from all classifications. We would urge a wider inquiry into staffing across the school system to include all non-teaching staff as well.

Many of our classifications are suffering shortages across the school system, from general assistance, particularly in western and south-western Sydney, school learning support officers statewide, school admin officers in various areas and school psychologists as well. Likewise there are staffing shortages throughout the department, particularly within the department's call centre, EDConnect, and EDConnect is the primary point of contact between schools and their department support services. This has led to massive frustration within school support staff and teachers across the board. Every minute spent on hold to the department is a minute they're not doing their job, and we are talking about hours lost every week per school, sitting on hold, waiting for staffing issues to be dealt with by EDConnect and for them to pick up the phone. Our members in the department are very frustrated by this. We're not talking about blame; we're talking here about the fact that there is no-one to pick up that phone on time.

Each of our classifications is part of the whole that is the Department of Education, and to put it plainly, each individual within the team is crucial to the ultimate goal, which is student wellbeing and success within a well-resourced and effective school system. It's no wonder we're concerned that the role of our members tends to be overlooked given the terms of reference of this Committee focuses solely on one classification. In our submission we demonstrate that internationally the role of our school support staff has and continues to evolve across all facets of school life.

We also talked in our submission about members who go above and beyond what is specified within their role of duties to ensure that the children's experience is that of an exceptional education. But our members do so under enormous pressure, and what we want to focus on today is permanency within the sector because the unfortunate fact is that many of the New South Wales school support staff are employed in insecure and short-term contracts. For example, over half—some 53 per cent—of the 21,000 school support staff covered by our major award, which is the School Admin and Support Officers Award, are in temporary arrangements of some means or other.

A disproportionate number of those in the temporary roles are school learning support officers. These are the officers that deal with students who need learning support within classrooms—direct support. They stay with a student all day. They don't take recess and lunch breaks; they're normally with the student in the playground during that time. These members are some of the lowest paid employees in the State. Even after the PSA's historic win in the pay equity case a few years ago before the Industrial Relations Commission, where these members were awarded in some classifications up to 36 per cent wage increases as a reflection of gender inequality over a long period of time, they still remain some of the lowest-paid employees in this State. After that case was won, they also are putting up with high levels of insecure work and increasing complexity in the work that they do for little recognition.

At the other end of the scale of members that we cover are school psychologists, who are a highly skilled professional workforce who work with our kids most at risk in school settings. They also deal with insecure work. Roughly 39 per cent of those members are in short-term contracts, and this is at a time when the department is having trouble finding suitably qualified people to fill those roles and also retention rates remain high within those

that the department are able to employ. The association has a long history of raising these issues with the department, seeking increases in the staffing formula, trying to deal with some of the historical funding issues around the way that disability is funded in the State system with Federal funding meaning some of that funding is not permanent.

But when you look at the statistics, you will see that the rate of support for disability in the New South Wales sector has increased each year over the past 20 years. We're not talking here about a system where there's great flux in the need, year on year. We're talking here about a requirement that is increasing and yet, because of the way that our members are employed, their status remains very insecure. We note the recent announcement of an additional 200 support staff across the 2,200 schools, but we're concerned that that will do little to impact on the burden of overloading our existing staff. It is the proverbial drop in the ocean—2,200 schools, 200 additional staff. When we're talking about a system in staffing crisis, what we're really talking about is adding 200 additional vacant positions to the department's employment.

We're also concerned about the statement that came out along with the 200 staff announcement, which talked about these admin roles taking up some of the functions of teachers to take the burden off teachers. For us, it's a bit of a slap in the face when that's exactly what the 21,000 members do—support teachers every day in schools with all their admin support, dealing with all those sorts of issues to try to create an environment where the teachers are focused on doing their primary role in the classroom with the students. We know that's not probably what was meant by the statement, but it's the way that it comes across to the public.

The whole approach to workforce planning within the New South Wales school system needs to be overhauled, in our view. Only then will longstanding issues around some of these issues be dealt with. If we're serious about that enhancement and sustainability of student wellbeing, then the roles that focus on that need to be secure and stable as part of that. For this to happen, the department needs to ensure that the sector has secure and permanent positions as the default, as the norm, and not simply for the few. Secure work for all New South Wales public servants should be the norm, not the exception. We thank the Committee for the opportunity to talk today, and we're happy to address any of the criteria of the inquiry or anything raised today.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Smith. From the outset, we might go to Mr D'Adam, who I think wants to make a declaration.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Yes, I want to declare a conflict of interest. I worked for the PSA for many years and worked very closely with Mr Smith, so I wanted to place that on record. I might open up with a question around the drivers of the insecurity. It's clear from your submission that a very high proportion of the administrative staff in schools are in insecure forms of employment, but it's not clear why. What is the driver of insecure employment tending to be the default rather than secure employment being the default?

DYLAN SMITH: I think there are many drivers. We should point out from the beginning that there is a bucket of money which is Federal money, which means that the security of that money and positions employed through that are a concern. We're taking that up with the Federal Government as the appropriate place to do so. But, broadly, the issue is the way that our members have been dealt with by schools over a long period of time. There are policies in place which deal with this across the public sector broadly. There are provisions within the GSE which deal with how employees should be employed, which prioritises permanency, but SAS staff are covered by a separate Act. The same provisions are not in there and are not being enforced in the same way. It's an unfair playing field for our members in schools, compared to the rest of the public sector.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: These are local decisions, the appointment decisions. Is it principals that are making the choice to elect to engage people on temporary contracts as opposed to engaging staff on a permanent basis or an ongoing basis?

DYLAN SMITH: The department is adamant that these decisions are held by the department. Unfortunately, the reality is that the people who are signing off on these decisions—the people who are looking at these decisions and putting forward the submissions to the department for consideration—are the principals. In that instance, you do have an inequity across the board, depending on the support of the principal for the positions and also just the pressures that individual schools face. There is clearly a view amongst many, many principals that they are concerned about being stuck with a permanent position where, if they do not require that position in years to come, it will be their responsibility to find the money to assist that. That is not my understanding of how the funding arrangement works, but that is clearly a driver of how principals approach these decisions.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I know from past experience that one of the issues particularly with SLSOs is that they tend to be attached to a specific student.

DYLAN SMITH: That's correct.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you able to give us a bit more information about how that process works and how an SLSO comes to be attached to a particular student? Is that a result of specific funding streams that are attached to individuals?

DYLAN SMITH: It is. The student and family will seek that support through the school. The school will then make a submission and receive a bucket of money, which will be used. I should say that, in practice, once that person is on staff, usually the principal will be using that resource across the board because the reality is that not all students who need support are eligible for funding. That position may work with a number of students, in reality, within the classroom or across the school. But, for the sake of their employment, that money is attached to that student.

That goes back to the point I was making in my opening statement. Although that money is attached to a student, we're not in a situation here where there's a great flux up and down on a yearly basis between allocations. The student is going to be there for six years, seven years in a primary setting and the majority of schools are finding that the increase overall across the school is going up most years. In reality, if we're talking about a department rather than a school, what we should be seeing is a department that has a system in place to ensure that the people who have the skills have been trained up. There is a fair amount of work that goes into training an SLSO before they start—that those skills are not lost or dealt with as, you know, "You're there for Timmy. Once Timmy goes, goodbye."

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I want to explore a bit further that issue around those students who don't attract any funding. It's not uncommon that you will have kids in a class that have behavioural issues that can be very disruptive. Having disruptive students in your class obviously compounds the stress and pressure on the teacher. If there is not a specific mechanism to attract funding for an SLSO to be in the classroom, is that something that we need to look at—trying to broaden the allocation of SLSOs so that they are able to be deployed in those classes where you have kids where there's not necessarily a diagnosed issue that would attract funding support but there are clearly behavioural issues that need to be managed? A second pair of hands in a classroom can make a big difference to keeping a classroom orderly and keeping students on task.

DYLAN SMITH: Yes, we would agree with that. That's clearly something that needs to be looked at. My understanding is that the funding does not keep up with the increased amount of disability or learning support needs that's prevalent within the school system. It's well documented that this is growth that I don't think anyone has predicted, but it continues to occur. It's an area that does create great distraction within classrooms where that support isn't available.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: In your submission you make reference to a couple of documents that I ask you to perhaps provide on notice to the Committee, that is, the statement of duties for SLSOs and the statement of duties for school administrative officers. There has been talk and, in fact, there have been some announcements at a Federal level about exploring this apprenticeship model, which could potentially see student teachers deployed in roles not dissimilar to the SLSO role in classrooms. Do you have some comments about your views on that approach, the apprenticeship model and having student teachers effectively perform some of the work that's currently being performed by SLSOs?

DYLAN SMITH: The view of the PSA is that the SLSO position is not a teaching position. It's never been that. It's never been funded like that. It is a support role. School learning support officers are not supposed to be left alone with students. They do not supervise students. They support the teacher within the classroom within that teaching environment and they perform a number of other functions around support of the student for their social needs, and medical needs in some instances as well. In that instance, the PSA would support any trial which is hoping to increase support to students and increase support to schools to fulfil their functions. Given the nature of this, surely the best use of student teachers is to get them into the system as teachers.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you for your submission and your time today. Could I just ask about the repeated criticism in your submission of the Local Schools, Local Decisions policy? It is criticism that I believe to be entirely valid. It's supposed to have been gone now for a couple of years, replaced by the School Success Model. In the practical work of your members, has anything changed?

DYLAN SMITH: Local Schools, Local Decisions led to a change in the way that administration was dealt with within schools. There was an increase in the requirements for the principal and there was also an increase in the requirements for the administrative staff in the offices. A new classification was created within schools, called the business manager, to assist the principal in those decisions. In terms of the industrial and practical setting within schools, those positions exist. They still perform the same functions that were created and implemented under Local Schools, Local Decisions. In terms of the administrative burden within the schools, that has not changed. If anything, it has increased. Whether that's the intent of the policy or not, for our members, that is the reality.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So your members haven't noticed any change in the last couple of years with the supposed abolition of Local Schools, Local Decisions?

DYLAN SMITH: From our members' point of view, things have continued to increase in terms of workload and requirements.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Has that increased workload for your members included attempts to shift the workload away from teachers and onto your members? These are some of the things we hear about.

DYLAN SMITH: I would not say that that was a policy outcome. I would say that it happens in schools on a case-by-case basis where you have schools in crisis.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What about proposals that your members would take on roles previously performed by teachers, such as data entry roles?

DYLAN SMITH: I would say that it would be a fallacy to say that our members do not undertake data entry roles. It is something that our—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I mean student marks and assessment and things that teachers have been expected to do in the past.

DYLAN SMITH: If the department wants to talk to us about changing the roles that our members undertake, then we are happy to do that. But whether teachers do it or whether admin staff do it, the question is about workload.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can I ask about the Government's rhetorical device of blaming COVID for everything? In the experience of your members, has the bad winter flu had a bigger impact on absenteeism than COVID?

DYLAN SMITH: I'm not in a position to answer that, to be honest.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Your submission doesn't make any mention of the impact of the flu. It's an open question, isn't it? Is COVID the big problem that we've had with sickness in the school system or the winter flu? If you're not able to answer it, that's fine. Finally, on the last page of your recommendations you refer to your association's workload survey and the Gallop report, and the problems of violence and aggression. Has the association got a policy on how to handle this? What would you do with a school like Walgett high, which is known as the biggest problem for violence against all types of staff in New South Wales? What do you tell your members about how to handle this disaster?

DYLAN SMITH: The department believes that, at the moment, the way that incidences are reported is an issue, due to staffing. It takes a long time to deal with some of these issues. In terms of violence in schools, there have been some changes in policy that I understand were made or are about to be implemented around student suspension and whatnot. I believe the PSA supports the view that the current policy should remain, rather than be replaced with the impending change. I believe that's a view supported by the Teachers Federation.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But is there anything specific about the real problematic schools, where admin staff and teachers are attacked on a regular basis? Do you tell your members not to seek jobs in these types of schools?

DYLAN SMITH: No, we've got nothing to say.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you for your submission and for coming along today. I wanted to go back to the SLSOs to understand a bit more about that. My limited experience with SLSOs is that they can make all the difference in the outcomes for a student's education. How many schools don't have any SLSOs?

DYLAN SMITH: I don't have that evidence to provide to you. I would suggest that very few schools do not have an SLSO.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do most schools have one or two? Do you have any data on how many there are?

DYLAN SMITH: You are talking about a broad range of schools here, especially between primary and secondary schools as well. There are special schools set up where there are a large number of SLSOs, like high needs schools and high needs units within schools. That's a very broad question to answer.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Was your evidence before, though—and forgive my ignorance—that you only get an SLSO if there is a student that has been identified with a disability of the kind that would allow that support? Or do we have a general assumption that we might get an SLSO?

DYLAN SMITH: I think at this point I should say that although I've used the term disability, I believe it is learning needs or learning support requirements, or something like that. It does go beyond just an identified disability. As I understand it, there is criteria which needs to be applied and applications depend on the quality of the information that's able to be supported or provided by the parents as well. If there are issues around the parent not being able to access what they need in terms of reports, some applications are going to be better than others.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I guess where I am going with this is that my understanding is that there are around 10 per cent of children in our schools with a disability, whether it is defined as that or not by the very narrow criteria that we sometimes use depending on what outcome we want. But anybody who has worked with a group of children knows that there are always children within that cohort who have special needs or different types of learning support required. Why are those positions not just permanent positions, regardless of the particular students coming in? Is that part of the problem—that they're seen as a kind of temporary add-on rather than a permanent part of the school staffing?

DYLAN SMITH: That would be our question as well: Why aren't these people employed permanently? We have a system operating within the department for teachers where, if numbers of students go up or down, the students are redeployed. There is not a similar situation that applies to many of the other classifications within schools.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: My experience of SLSOs is that they also can be very useful for teachers in devising behaviour management strategies more generally for all sorts of different types of children in their care, but also that they can be very useful in identifying for the first time that a child has a learning disability. In your view, would a focus on increasing the number of SLSOs have a broader benefit for education more generally?

DYLAN SMITH: We do, and we also note that there are classifications within schools other than SLSOs that perform that function, such as school psychologists, such as student support officers that perform those functions. Any sort of support like that is going to assist the school in not only identifying but then also helping guide the family through the process of "This is the sort of evidence that you're going to need to support an application for support for your child".

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If there were significantly more SLSOs in the system, or at least if there was an assumption that they were permanent positions within the school staffing structure, would there be sufficient individuals to fulfil those roles? Do we have enough people who would be able to come through?

DYLAN SMITH: You're asking me now about planning the economy as a whole.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No, sorry, I guess my question is more around the current qualifications. Do you know if we're seeing people attempting to become SLSOs and not being able to get the qualifications? Are there any of those concerns like you see with teachers?

DYLAN SMITH: As we talked about in the submission, the history of the positions—it started off almost as a parental volunteering to assist with a student and became a formalised position, and became then a skilled position that assisted with more and more tasks within the school environment. A large proportion of people who move into these roles are parents who are returning to the workforce after their students are starting to get older. I think that's part of the historical bent towards older females, which is the current demographic of the positions. But the role has evolved; it has become more professional. I feel that it would definitely be a position that could be filled in greater numbers if needed.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Good morning. Thanks so much for your time, for your submission and for your testimony. I think it was probably an oversight on our behalf when establishing the inquiry that we didn't include your support staff. Thank you very much, and you can pass on our Committee's thanks for the very important work that they do in our schools supporting the teachers and providing that administrative support. Our inquiry conducted a survey as part of our opening for submissions. Of over 11,000 responses, 8,500 were teachers. Of those, 92 per cent said workload is the issue that's going to force them to leave the profession, which they don't want to do. We certainly recognise the important work that's done. You've got a number of recommendations in your submission. I wanted to talk about the reintroduction of centralised school support services. You note that they're not related to the core education purpose for schools but, as we know, if they're not provided then teachers end up having to do that instead. What kind of support services would they be?

DYLAN SMITH: It would be around providing some of the support that we're talking about in terms of curriculum support. I might hand over to Andy on this one.

ANDY ASQUITH: In terms of things like corporate services, where you could have a central pool of expertise rather than each school just duplicating and sometimes perhaps not getting the top quality information and advice that they would desire.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Absolutely, Mr Smith, and you talked about how Local Schools, Locals Decisions has directly contributed to that additional burden. Would that be the kind of thing that would have been done in the past?

DYLAN SMITH: It would be, and I guess I would raise EDConnect, which, as I said, is sort of the primary way by which schools interact with the department these days. So if there is an incident—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can I jump in and ask you a dumb question. If a teacher's waiting on hold for EDConnect, what kinds of things would they be calling up for? What kinds of support?

DYLAN SMITH: That could be there was an incident in the school; a child had been injured. They need to report that injury to ensure that that's followed through. That report is done through EDConnect. It's not online; it's usually done over the phone. If there's a payment that needs to be made then our admin officer is going to ring up EDConnect to confirm that payment and to process a lot of these things online. If there's an issue with one of these payments that needs to be logged through IT, you ring EDConnect and you get referred on to the IT section. So it's a broad range of support functions which goes through a single pool of staff in at head office, which in our experience has been under-resourced and is a very itinerant workforce, which means that that corporate knowledge has not been maintained.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We heard testimony yesterday from researchers at a range of universities, and they were talking about how Local Schools, Local Decisions has directly contributed to the rise in temporary teaching roles. Would you say that we could say the same thing about admin support—that Local Schools, Local Decisions has led to an increase in temporary employment within the department?

DYLAN SMITH: I would say that, historically, we have always had a high level. The teachers have had a number of processes, and that's not my bailiwick so I won't get into that. But we have traditionally always had a higher level of itinerant workforce than the teaching staff. I would say that it has not been assisted by Local Schools, Local Decisions and does not look like improving, given the way that things have been heading.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The RAM funding, then, for associated services—you said 39 per cent of your school psychologists are on short-term contracts. Does that then also influence the short-term contracts that are in schools?

DYLAN SMITH: School psychologists are a bit different. They're sort of a duplication of a teaching function, which is a school counsellor. School psychologists were created because the department could not find enough qualified people to fill school counsellor roles. To become a school counsellor, you need a teacher's degree and psychologist's degree. There's not enough of them. School psychologist positions were created because of that very absence of the workforce that was needed, and we can't find enough—no, sorry, that's not correct. We cannot retain enough of them. It's difficult to fill the roles, and they are not being retained. There are some differences in the way that the two classifications are treated in terms of their conditions of employment, and it's very difficult for our members to sit beside somebody on the same money but doing different conditions—better conditions—who have priority for transfer and yet our members have no transfer system. If our members wish to change school or change position, they need to apply as if they were an outsider to the system.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think we could talk about the need for school counsellors and school psychologists for another couple of hours, but I just wanted to touch on one final issue before I pass back to the Acting Chair. You talked about how school principals should be encouraged to use base funding to move staff engaged in temporary, insecure employment onto permanent contracts. How could that happen? Would that be a policy decision by the department? How could we make that happen?

DYLAN SMITH: It would be as simple as encouraging principals to do so. The mechanisms are in place. We would say that at the moment the department is reluctant to positively reinforce that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That's really helpful. Thanks very much.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much for your evidence here today. I think it's been compelling for the Committee. If you've taken any questions on notice, which I don't think you have—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Sorry, Chair, could I ask a further question?

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr D'Adam.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: There are five minutes still assigned. I wanted to come to an observation in your submission around the growth in executive staff and the consequential growth then in administrative work. There's been a lot of discourse in the system around enhancing school leadership, educational leadership and we've seen the department put in place these assistant principal positions for curriculum and instruction. Is that driving additional workload and can you give us some indication of why those leadership positions are creating an increase in workload for administrative staff?

ANDY ASQUITH: Each time there's a new senior position created, there's a supporting structure needed there for them. For each senior person that is appointed, there are additional administrative functions that need to be performed to keep them up to speed and that falls on our members.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: There's no funding allocated for that additional administrative support?

ANDY ASQUITH: No. It's a the senior teaching, assistant principal role that is funded and there is no funding that goes with it to provide the infrastructure, if you like.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That was the only question I wanted to ask. Thank you.

The ACTING CHAIR: As stated, if you've taken any questions on notice, which I don't recall you have, in this period—actually, no, you did. Mr D'Adam asked you for two documents.

DYLAN SMITH: There was a request for, I think, two statements of duties. Can I just confirm what you would like?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Yes, that's right.

DYLAN SMITH: Was it the school learning support officer, and what was the other function?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: And the school administrative officer statements of duties.

DYLAN SMITH: We can provide those.

The ACTING CHAIR: There are 21 days from receipt of the transcript for you to provide those to the Committee. Thank you for your attendance here today and for the evidence that you've provided to the Committee.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr DAVID HOPE, President, Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations, affirmed and examined

Ms SHARRYN BROWNLEE, President, Central Coast District Council of P&C Associations, affirmed and examined

Ms NARELLE HORTON, President, Russell Lea Public School P&C Association, affirmed and examined

The ACTING CHAIR: Would any of you like to make a short opening statement for the Committee?

DAVID HOPE: We'd like to. We've got some opening statement notes here just in case you miss all the important bits.

The ACTING CHAIR: Wonderful. Could you hand those up? The secretariat is just behind you. If you have got additional copies, that would be helpful for Hansard.

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: We brought 10.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ten copies! Even better. Mr Hope, are you doing that on behalf of both organisations?

DAVID HOPE: I am, yes. We've had a look at some of the other submissions since we wrote our own submission and we've found the New South Wales Government's submission to be comprehensive. What we liked about it was it signalled the intent but we do have concerns. The Minister said in that particular submission that the strategy sets us on a journey. That is very important because these business reform projects take a long time often. From our perspective, we've seen over the years a number of reform initiatives which have looked promising but have either retreated to the status quo or have just not worked well at all. So, there's an implementation issue. These include—and we've listed them in the notes—such things as the *One Size Doesn't Fit All* report going back to 2005, and there's a few others.

Successful change programs need to take place within a reasoned and prioritised organisational change strategy and plan. That includes having decent project management expertise behind it to make sure things actually happen. That hasn't been a feature of the department's operations in the past, at least not to the level that we believe it should be. The department's submission talks about complementing a range of other strategic reforms and initiatives. In a large organisation like the department, there are always going to be a lot of areas that need reform but they need to be prioritised because you can't do them all at once. If you're doing something like this, you still need to have a link to what the other reforms might be. There needs to be an overall strategy, an overall program team running the reform project, not just left with the operators or some other part of the organisation.

That's been one of the difficulties with the teachers in the schools: They cop a whole lot of stuff from the policy areas and other areas of expertise in the department and that may be good, but it's uncoordinated and you end up with a whole lot of duplication and things that shouldn't really be implemented in the way they are being implemented. I think that's probably all I really want to say here, except for the fact that we saw in some submissions that universities were saying, "Let's train paraprofessionals and put them in place." The New South Wales Government has done this in the past. Back in the fifties and sixties they had cadets going into the water utility and electricity utilities and all those sorts of things. Some of those cadets were part-timers, so they worked 4½ days a week and then they did maybe 12 hours of lectures at night and on the other half day. Some of them were full-timers but the feature was they were all on bonds, so they needed to stay with the department they were working with for five years. We believe that could be something that could be used as well. So, that's it.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Horton, did you have anything to say on behalf of Russell Lea Public School P&C?

NARELLE HORTON: I feel that the letter I submitted was—

The ACTING CHAIR: Sufficient? Fantastic. We will go to questions now. Mr Latham.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you to the P&C and school representatives for their submissions and attendance today. Just looking at the submission from Northern Sydney and Central Coast, you say that the shortage of teachers may not be large in percentage terms, said to be less than 4 per cent, but then you list some very disturbing experiences, outcomes about the lack of in-field teachers in maths, other specialist areas including music and language. Is that your main priority that you believe the Government should be targeting to fix, the large number of out-of-field teachers we have, in some of these STEM subjects in particular?

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: We were looking at the mandatory components for the curriculum delivery and noting that students in their early years of high school were not getting the curriculum. So while government and NESA were articulating and declaring that there's a broad curriculum offering for students, we were

demonstrating that it's not delivered, that those students don't get—not just an opportunity around subject choice; they don't even get the curriculum delivery as it's mandated. There's a false assumption by the broader community, the taxpayer and the Parliament that education is being delivered in all spheres and an understanding—a lot of money is spent on some of those curriculum committees and reform. And it's certainly not being delivered for those students on site. That's what we were trying to really identify.

Then the bigger issue around some of those areas of genuine teacher shortage, where children are just in a hall or in a room in a combined class with no teaching and learning taking place, just supervision, is of great concern to those parents. But, certainly, geography teachers teaching maths and being one week ahead of students, teachers teaching right out of subject area and having students not engaged—no wonder it's leading to behaviour issues. And we could touch on some of the discussion around inclusive education and the lack there of quality teachers and specialised teachers, should I say, in that area to look after the needs of those students. So the failure of actually having the profession as articulated to deliver the curriculum as publicised was a really big concern for us.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Just anecdotally—your own estimate—what do you think is the learning disadvantage students face in not having an in-field teacher? Is it a 10 per cent, 20 per cent setback in their learning results, their academic results compared to if they did have—

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: We actually think, Mr Latham, it might be higher than that. Because once a student is not engaged in the classroom and they're not engaged in that subject, they lose respect for what's happening in the school and respect for the whole system. It can have a knock-on effect that means by the time they're in year 8 or 9 they're already disengaged from school. There may only be one or two subjects where they're really engaged with a teacher that's all over the subject area and the students are really engaged. Those students are disengaged and moving on. In some schools we think the percentage might be even higher. If you have a look at year 7 enrolment compared to year 12 completion, you will see hundreds, literally thousands, of students who don't complete. It's not about "either or" for an HSC or vocational education and training like Victoria; it's about that they don't complete education at all. So that lack of engagement in the early years, we really believe, is crucial to them engaging in the school, the system and belonging to that school.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In terms of solutions, what do you think of the idea that's being advanced of scholarships in initial teacher education but also for career changers to come into these areas, where clearly in New South Wales we've got a paucity of in-field teachers?

DAVID HOPE: We think that's a good idea. Personally, I had somebody that used to work for me, an electrical engineer—would've made the perfect teacher. He decided he wanted to change careers at around about 40. He'd had a lot of experience in industry and he was a very clever guy. He just couldn't get into the public system. He ended up going to the Catholic system. We're really supportive of having that diversity of people coming into the system. It should be made easy. It was almost a barrier which was on purpose because the department didn't seem to want people coming in from outside. I think that's changed now. We'd really like to see that happen.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: On page 2 of your submission you raise the very relevant point that, at a time of general teacher shortages in New South Wales, the Government has announced universal four-year-old education in preschool. Where are we going to get the educators from? What's your view of the policy of universal four-year-old education? Do you think it's pie in the sky because we can't adequately staff teachers at the front of classrooms in our schools? Where are we going to find them over the next couple of years for preschool education?

DAVID HOPE: That is a really vexed question. We believe that the preschool stuff is where a lot of the equity learning comes from, because there are people coming from families with no educated parents and these poor kids come into the school system—also the minds of kids are more open then to some types of learning and we really support that. As you probably know, in the preschool system they have teachers and assistant teachers in the classroom. We've said elsewhere in our submission that, if the system was student focused, everybody in a classroom right through the system would be learning at the level that they were capable of taking and capable of being interested in. That can't happen with single teachers in the classroom because a single teacher cannot possibly do this. What you've got to do is introduce team teaching and a whole lot of other measures, which are sometimes controversial, but we don't think the single teacher in a classroom actually is succeeding, because look at the huge gap between schools in terms of performance and between high SES schools and low SES schools. It's not an equitable system.

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: That's right. I just restate that we're very strong supporters and were actually involved in the latest rollout of preschools in public schools. That's many years ago now and the big difference it made for those communities, for the workforce but also for the individual families—it also meant that government agencies could touch base with a family for the first time that may be at risk and weren't known. It also meant

much earlier identification of speech pathology, hearing needs or other learning difficulties, so a prior-to-school experience is really important. We think it's vital.

On your question, Mr Latham, about workforce planning, it's been the greatest failure of the Department of Education. It's the staffing unit—not the individual people—the lack of surety around the jobs, the lack of comprehensive accountability to you in the Parliament or elsewhere for the decisions they make around transfers and the decisions that they make about appointments. Even when we sit on many merit selection panels—and we do, and we would talk about the equity and the transparency there—the behind-the-scenes functions in the staffing unit are opaque. I think they lead to great concerns and I think that university students coming up through their teaching training—and academics would tell you that they find a brick wall and great difficulty there unless they can build a relationship with an individual school for work placement for their students.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I might start with Ms Horton. Thank you for your submission. I suppose my first question is about the impact on students of collapsed classes. What can you tell us about how that actually impacts on students when you've got collapsed classes that you've described in your submission?

NARELLE HORTON: I got it firsthand from my two daughters. One is in stage three in year 6 and the other is in stage two in year 4. We have three stage three classes and two of those teachers were off for an entire week due to COVID. That's approximately 75 stage three students with one teacher. The decision was made by the school to farm them out to other classes because there was no casual teacher cover. That was for the five days, but for three days they were able to get substitute teachers or casual teachers. On the two days where they were sent to other classrooms, it put additional burden on those teachers. My younger daughter reported that her teacher became quite flustered and stressed and angry having approximately eight year 6 students arrive into her classroom. There were no chairs or desks for them to sit. But they were just told to sit down and get on with their work.

My year 6 daughter said it was difficult to do their work because everybody was trying to access their devices and the wi-fi didn't work so that was another challenge. Our school is very lucky that we are one-to-one devices due to being a new school and the Government gave us the devices so we're very aware of our—we're not like a regular school. That was just one issue, but there was no learning. They felt like they were just in the way of that stage two teacher. So they moved to another room and the teacher came in and shouted at them: "Why are you in here? You should be out with me. I'm supposed to be watching you." But she wasn't actually supervising them or helping them. She was focusing on her class and trying to deliver her lessons. My elder daughter just felt abandoned, so they went back to their stage three teacher, who was the only one there. She tried to sort it out.

So it impacts the student that they're not getting any work done. They couldn't complete their tasks and for that entire week they didn't do any learning. They were given substitute teachers on three days and they were just doing things like art and games. So when their teachers returned from sick leave, there was a whole week of learning that they needed to catch up on and my daughter reported that that was quite stressful for the teachers and the students, and there were issues with getting everything done within the time frame that they had. So certain lessons were skipped. That's what she reported to me.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So there are clearly issues that are created because teachers have to report against particular curriculum outcomes. And if they've got less time as a result of those absences and there hasn't been learning undertaken in their absence so there's not a capacity for the school to actually deliver the necessary content to meet those curriculum outcomes, then the kids are at a disadvantage.

NARELLE HORTON: That's right.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: But the teachers also are under intense pressure to try and find some time, to try and identify reporting outcomes and to do assessments, as well as make sure the kids have covered the content so that they can be assessed against it. It really compresses the whole situation if that learning is not happening, doesn't it?

NARELLE HORTON: That's right. And there's an increasing number of students at our school, and I'm sure all primary schools and all high schools, that are anxious. There's anxiety now as a result of COVID or just the times that we're living in. So there's a number of students that struggle getting to school, first of all—that's an issue—but then to get to school and not know what they're going to face or which teacher they're going to have, if they're aware that their teacher's going to be off for a long period. So that was conveyed to me by parents as well and instances where one child is unable to deal with large groups. So when classes are merged, or collapsed and put together, she just had trouble being in such a large environment with so many students. It affected her ability to learn that day.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What consultation did the school engage in around the decision? They've made a decision about how to manage the situation through split classes. Do parents get advised that their students are going to be put in split classes? Is there any communication?

NARELLE HORTON: Generally you hear it at the end of the day from the students. There are instances where year 2 students were sent to kindy classes and went home to their parent and were just like, "Mum, I had to go to kindy today. It was so uncool." They just felt offended. They're wanting to do the learning that they're supposed to be doing and that wasn't happening. They were just being babysat by another teacher.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: One of the concerns that I've had is that there's really not sufficient information provided to parents about what's happening with staffing in the school. Would you be aware, as a parent active on the P&C, how many staff are actually engaged in secure contracts? Do you know how many temporary teachers there are at your school?

NARELLE HORTON: I don't know that. I'd love to know. It's an ongoing concern because we were told at our last P&C meeting this month there are three open positions that were going to be filled—one centrally filled. And the principal explained that he has no say in that. We're not too sure what will come out of that. He would like to be actively involved in recruiting his teaching staff. The current teachers at the school, we all really like, and we could potentially lose up to three of them due to the movement with temporary versus permanent. I don't have a great understanding of that. He doesn't get into details with me because I am not sure that that's something that parents should know, from his perspective.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Yes, I don't think the department has a clear view. Well, I think they probably are reluctant to share that type of information with the parent community, even though that volatility in staffing can lead to a churn of teachers through a school. What impact does it have on kids if the teachers are constantly changing in a school community? Does it impact on the relationships that are able to be constructed between parents and children and the teaching staff?

NARELLE HORTON: I think the students like consistency—knowing who their teacher is. So when there's constant change—we have acting assistant principals and we don't know if they're going to be there next year after the recruitment process. And a lot of children like those particular teachers and want to have them as their teachers next year. But we might find that they're no longer at the school. Parents like to know who their children are going to have and develop a relationship with them. Could you repeat some of your question? I'm not sure if I answered it.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I suppose I am getting at that issue around how it's nice when your kids can see that there's a teacher that they might have had in kindergarten that is still there when they graduate in year 6. And even though they might not be their direct classroom teacher, there's someone that they have an ongoing relationship with, and it gives that sort of stability that's important in those early years of growth—having those stable relationships. So I suppose my question is really directed to the impact on kids and their confidence and the kind of relationships that are important to their education. Do you have any further comments in relation to that issue?

NARELLE HORTON: My children—and I'm sure all other children—one day they love a teacher and the next day they don't. But I think it's lovely the kindergarten teacher that both my daughters had is still at the school. So when one of them graduates and moves on to high school at the end of this year, that teacher will be there at her graduation. I think that is very important.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Thanks. I might turn to Mr Hope and Ms Brownlee. In your submission, you talk about the scholarship model. I have to say my father did a scholarship back in the fifties. He did his first bonded service at Bombala Public School. It was a one-teacher school and he ended up staying in the system for 40 years. So I think there is certainly something to be learned from that previous experience. We've had evidence around the apprenticeship-type model and changing the way initial teacher education works so that teachers from the get-go are attached to particular schools or particular clusters of schools. Do you think there's merit in that approach?

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: Absolutely. We'd support that wholeheartedly. If I put my pro-chancellor hat on from my time at a university council, I would be able to tell you the incentive is to recruit teachers, and the universities are paid on enrolment. They're not paid on completion. So I think that having a new Federal Minister in Jason Clare talking to the State Ministers is going to have a huge impact and some accountability and responsibility, as Commonwealth dollars filter down to the different jurisdictions. I think it's vital for universities to be held much more accountable for the placement of teachers that they take the funds for. The department, again—as well as some of the other sectors, but we only speak for the department—has a responsibility also to make sure that those teachers get a proper support in the classroom, and they're not just left with the newest teacher

in the newest classroom to be able to limp their way through their placement and then often not complete. That lack of retention in the first five years is all about the lack of support for initial teachers in their schools and through their placement.

DAVID HOPE: The education system is different to most other systems. If you're in another profession, when you're a starting person, you don't have responsibilities that a starting teacher does, which is the whole classroom. You have responsibilities under other people, and you work together as a team. I think that's one of the difficulties when a teacher comes out of university and not a teachers' college like they used to. They're just out of their depth. So we actually support that, as Sharryn said, quite strongly. The other thing I'd like to say about the question you asked Narelle was that in northern Sydney there are some schools which have got team teaching. And those classes, when some teacher is away, are much more resilient because the kids are in a class, in a room, with either two or four teachers in that group of classes and they know all the kids. So they're not being sent off to some other teacher who doesn't want them. They're in their own environment with people they know.

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: That's right. As for the movement in a school, I've just been in another school, helping them, where they've had a churn and staffing has allocated some permanent positions. They've lost some much-loved teachers. Not only do the children lose that from their individual classrooms and the ongoing relationships; the culture of the school changes. Policy and procedures are lost. There's a reinvention of the wheel, and it's not good change management; it's "learn as you go and grab what ropes you can as you swing through the process", instead of having a consistent induction. "Onboarding program" is the new buzzword for HR at the moment. There's a lack of systems and control, and it is "get by as best you can, manage and support each other as best you can". There are no consistent policies and procedures to be able to be onboarded into a school and to manage what happens.

The children are disadvantaged because the culture is lost, policies change and what happened for an older sibling in stage 3 doesn't happen for a younger sibling. There are inconsistencies and parents are incredibly frustrated by the lack of consistency from that whole K to 6 transition. The expectation of what children can do in fourth class they are not allowed to do in second class, and the things that come with being older children in the school, can be all lost and systems change quite radically. That has a huge impact. Again, it disconnects children. They lose their trust, and they lose their confidence in what is happening in the system.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Apologies—I just had to duck out for another meeting, but I really appreciate your time. Over many inquiries, your organisation has been an active participant in those, which has been really helpful for us, so thank you. I know a number of us think that parents' voices are really important when we're talking about schools, and that can be difficult to sometimes vocalise, so we really appreciate your advocacy. I wanted to ask each of you a really simple question, which your submission does cover: What is the impact of teacher shortages on students and on parents? Ms Horton, do you want to start?

NARELLE HORTON: On students, well, they don't know who they're going to have. They don't know if it's going to be a casual teacher that they don't know and there's no connection, and those teachers don't know the children to support them with their learning. For parents, it's frustrating because education is something that every child is entitled to, and there are times when nothing is being delivered because their children are just coming home saying, "My teacher was off, and we had to go somewhere else and we babysat," basically. That's sort of the key thing I get from my children and what other parents tell me.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You would say it's really disruptive to their learning.

NARELLE HORTON: It's very disruptive. I went through a situation—I'm not sure if you were in the room for that—about my daughter having no teacher for a whole week and how they were sent to different classrooms. That was for two days, and then three days they had substitute teachers and there was no learning done. They were just given activities to do to fill the time. So that was very disruptive, and it created a knock-on effect for the curriculum that they needed to learn. For a year 6 student, it's a very critical year, going off to high school.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Of course.

NARELLE HORTON: So it disrupted that class—or the two classes that were impacted, as well as the other classes that they were spread across. Those teachers were overwhelmed and stressed. When I said that to my daughter, "Is that a nice way to say it?" she said that's a very nice way to say it because she was angry.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Obviously, by the time a child is in year 6, they can feel the impact on their learning themselves. When they're a bit littler, as a parent you might get upset, but when they're in year 6 they're actually feeling it.

NARELLE HORTON: Yes, absolutely.

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DAVID HOPE: The biggest problem with this is—we quoted in our submission that I think it was 4 per cent of classrooms at any one time were not having their right teacher there. That was a figure that was published by the department, I think. Now, what that shows is that a lot of the time the teacher is there, but there are certain schools that really cop it, particularly the ones in regional areas. But there are also some in northern Sydney that are like that where there are multiple teachers—particularly with COVID—off from time to time, and that really disrupts the kids if it's more than a day. Sometimes it's weeks—people get sick, and they're away for a couple of weeks. But the same schools seem to cop the same problem, and they're the ones that are hard to staff, for whatever reason. It's really that inequity is a really bad thing, and we don't know what all the solutions are. We've suggested some stuff in our submission. But what we are mainly pushing is to having a proper system to manage these reforms so that those problems don't just sit there for decade after decade, just rotting away and never improving.

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: That's right. I think that it's really important to recognise that for some children two or three years is really important to them; that those years in early primary and primary, beginning of high school really matter. They don't have time for people to take time to just say, "We've had a teacher shortage, and we've known about it for 10 years, and we didn't do anything." It's really important to know about it, to act on it and to be responsible. We do call on the Minister and the Government to have done more about this because it was known, and there are lots of strategies and different ideas that could have been tried. We recognise there has been COVID, but, outside of that, teachers have still been working and salaries are still being paid. Apart from a short time when parents were struggling because schools were closed, the world continues to go on in a child's life, and it's vital for them to have a quality teacher in front of them who knows what they're doing and to feel safe and secure, particularly the younger children. But in a high school it's vital that adolescents that are dealing with COVID, for a start, and with their own changing bodies and environments around them have some surety and stability when it's mandatory in this country to go to school, unless you undertake homeschooling.

By law, children have to be at school, and to have failures in the system like we have at the moment is totally unacceptable, and it has been known for some time. Outside some general broad strategies that haven't worked and announcements that haven't worked, we see children continually being disadvantaged in schools. As David indicated, some of them are mainstream schools in local, popular areas, and some of them are regional and remote. We've got colleagues across the State, and we both do some work with colleagues interstate as well. To know and understand what's happening is vital. If you look at strategies in other jurisdictions, New South Wales is behind the eight ball here, and we haven't acted and we haven't been flexible. I think it really behoves us as parents, community and the P&C to as passionately and as strongly as possible say it's unacceptable.

It's unacceptable for children right now; it's unacceptable for them next year. What are the strategies? They don't have time for someone to be thinking about it and planning about it and at the same time continuing to not report publicly or to the Parliament about what's happening with staffing and be honest and transparent about the casual pool, the lack of trained SLSOs, the lack of people coming through and where the gaps are. We are really concerned that those schools and those children continue to be severely disadvantaged. It will come through in the learning outcomes but, even more importantly, school retention and completion—that data is vital, and those children end up with a very lacklustre start of life. We're spending $19 billion of taxpayers' money in this State, and we are certainly not getting the money or the outcomes that we should be.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think the point you make about the fact that the Government knew this was coming—we've uncovered that consistently through SO 52s that the Government had indicators but refused to acknowledge it publicly. In fact, it's only once the Federal Labor Government said that we've got a teacher shortage that the New South Wales Government was prepared to say it. We really are concerned about the impact on—they knew this was coming. Obviously, it takes time to recruit teachers, to train teachers and to actually solve the problem, but I think you're absolutely spot on. The impact on children's learning over time—they don't get that time back.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is there a question?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: No, there is not a question. That was just more of "I wholeheartedly agree", and I thank you for your time.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I wanted a clarification. With one of your recommendations that you have a flying corps of teachers above establishment, I am not sure I understand how that would solve the supply issue you talk about. Could you talk me through that?

DAVID HOPE: What happens now is there are a lot of teachers who are not permanent employees of the department, and they fill positions in our region, all over the place, and across the State.

Some principals actually like those people who are not on the full-time payroll because they can choose the person—but that's just an aside. But what actually happens is if you've got these people who are available in the market—and they are, though some of them are only working part time. But if you had a group of people above establishment who are actually full-time employees, not allocated to a school but maybe to an area, you'd have better access to those people than you do with the random issues that principals face now. Somebody from the school has to ring a group of people who are casuals who can either come to work or not come to work. They can't just say, "Okay, there's the pool of people who are the supernumeraries. That person's available today because they're in the central records as not being allocated to a school," and you can get that person straightaway and they're obliged to come because they're working.

We think that could solve some of the problems with kids not having teachers in their classroom. If you add 3 per cent of staff on that sort of system, there would be 3 per cent more people available to fill those positions. But that's all it is; it's fairly simple. Sometimes they might have to travel a fair way, so you might have to put something in their conditions to say, "If you've got to go to Dubbo for a week, what do we do?" But at least you can get people to move around. You've got them there on your books. Does that answer the question?

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I think so.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much for attending today and for your submission.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I just wanted to follow up on that one, Scott.

The ACTING CHAIR: Yes, Mr D'Adam.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Actually, the additional question that I was going to ask was about that fly-in, fly-out approach to casual staffing. I wonder whether there are industrial implications of effectively creating a classification that moves away from having someone attached to a particular school and whether that would create issues?

DAVID HOPE: The industrial implication shouldn't trump the needs of the kids. The department and the union, the Teachers Federation, should be able to get together and work out how that would work. There are a number of different things that we've looked at over the years, and this appointment of teachers to individual schools is a good thing in some ways. But if the department needs to change that because of changing numbers at schools, it becomes a bit of a problem. But to your question, again, there is no reason why the department and the Teachers Federation can't come to an agreement about how that would work.

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: It works for consultants. The department already has consultants who move around and operate across schools. Directors of education and leadership move across schools and operate in groups of schools. About 20 is the number now, so they've reduced it down from the larger number, but you could easily do that and there would be guaranteed employment for those who want some part-time employment. Teachers who are on long service leave or when there is the flu season, traditionally—I am talking outside of the COVID sphere. In the past principals did have their own pool, if they were able to, of casuals they would like to call, and some casuals will only work in some schools, but if you don't have that network and that opportunity—or people who are recently retired will often be called back and they will work in a couple of schools where they're known, but they have no consistency, no guarantee of employment.

When they make other decisions about income—and lots of retired teachers still need to have an income—those decisions would be so much simpler if they were guaranteed work. In a school education setting, there would be no time at any time in a 20-school system where someone couldn't do with a couple of extra hours, extra days and extra work. I think better planning for staffing would make all the difference. The entire workforce of the State has people come and go on long service leave and people be unwell. It's ridiculous to think that in a school system where it matters so very much, we can't get adults in front of children when the learning needs to take place.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So should we be shifting the workforce planning to that principal network level? Is that where we should be going?

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: In the past, the staffing directorate of the Department of Education used to have a relationship, and they used to have senior officers in staffing who were responsible for those clusters of schools. So if it didn't sit with the principals directly or sit with the directors, it did sit with staff who had senior offices. By reducing those senior positions—saving money, having itinerant workers and having no-one responsible or accountable for clusters of schools—there's an abrogation of responsibility in the staffing unit to not be accountable for what's happening in schools. We do think that those squads could sit with the directors' networks—they don't have to sit with the directors individually—or they could sit with the executive directors, which is the next position up, and those squads would work from that position there.

These people at the moment are working with paraprofessionals, the speech pathologists, the SLSOs. They are working already with the consultancy, so there's already a moveable feast of staffing that they work with—and school counsellors, where they can get them. On those school counsellors, I will just say—the comment was raised earlier by the PSA—the reporting to the Parliament that every school has a full-time counsellor might be full-time equivalent but the placement of school counsellors is such that they move between schools—they always move between schools. They will do two days in one school, a couple of days in a primary school and maybe another day in another high school. So on every different day they are not allocated to the one school. When the student wellbeing meeting takes place or there is a need for consistency for those children, it's not the same counsellor every day that the children have access to. We want to make that point, and we are sorry we didn't make it in our submission. We were more focused on the classroom teaching.

But it's really important to state that the school counsellor data and information that is reported to the Parliament is not as factual and accurate as it is on the ground. I know you said we could have a long conversation to previous people making the submission about the stress of school counsellor absence and the different models, but the pressure on teachers, students and parents is phenomenal. Particularly in the early years when a child is first diagnosed, they need consistency and the parents need support. If you don't get it right in those early years, often you don't get it right. You can see that in the data. I keep referring back to the publicly available data about student enrolment, looking at retention and completion and those who are no longer in the system or anywhere, and trying to track those children down and get them some life opportunity around education. It becomes a cycle if we don't manage it better in schools.

NARELLE HORTON: May I add something to that, please? At our school we were allocated a counsellor but there was nobody. I wrote to Sarah Mitchell to outline our concern, on behalf of all the parents, that we did not have a school counsellor for a period of around three or four months. People were allocated to us, but for reasons unknown to me they were then put elsewhere. We were not a base school. But within that group from local base schools, we were the only school in our district that didn't have a counsellor coming on a consistent basis. There are a lot of students at our school who need that support, so it was disappointing. We took action—I wrote a letter—and thankfully we have now got a counsellor for the allocation that we were provided. I also just wanted to add we've had SLSO staff sent to classrooms to cover as well, so they're taken away from their duties of supporting those children who need that extra support to cover the teacher shortage.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you for your evidence today. If you took any questions on notice, you have 21 days from receipt of the transcript to come back to the Committee with that information. I don't know if any of you did take any questions on notice today, so I think you might escape that.

DAVID HOPE: No, we didn't.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much for your attendance today and for your participation in the inquiry.

DAVID HOPE: Thank you for listening.

SHARRYN BROWNLEE: This inquiry is very important. It's the only place where there's a genuine conversation and correct information provided to the public, so we really thank you very much for continuing to do these inquiries. They're very important.

DAVID HOPE: The school counsellor situation is that the department has a central pool, but people are allowed to choose which school they go to depending on what's more convenient. That's probably what happened to your school, that nobody wanted to come there because they get a choice of three or four schools.

NARELLE HORTON: I just don't think there was anyone available.

The ACTING CHAIR: We might have to continue this conversation at another time.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr PAUL MARTIN, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Education Standards Authority, affirmed and examined

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr Paul Martin from NESA, thank you very much for being here—a regular attendee at all of our Education Committee inquiries. Do you have an opening statement you would like to provide for this inquiry?

PAUL MARTIN: I do, if that's okay—just a very brief one.

The ACTING CHAIR: Of course you may.

PAUL MARTIN: Good afternoon, Chair and Committee members. My name is Paul Martin. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Education Standards Authority, known as NESA. As you know, NESA is an independent statutory authority within the Education cluster of the New South Wales Government. It is a portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Teacher accreditation has been in place in New South Wales since 2004 for all teachers entering the profession. Accreditation for all teachers was phased in, with early childhood teachers included from 2016 and existing schoolteachers from 2018.

NESA's functions under the Teacher Accreditation Act include the accreditation of initial teacher education programs and standards for entry into the profession; teacher accreditation processes, which include ensuring teachers have appropriate qualifications; child safety and suitability requirements, which include the Working With Children Check compliance; supporting teachers to meet the Australian professional standards for teaching, including at the higher levels; ongoing requirements for maintenance of accreditation, including professional development requirements. NESA makes regulatory decisions for teachers employed across government and non-government schools and systems. We are not an employing authority. We do not make decisions about award or salary processes.

NESA holds teacher accreditation data for the New South Wales teaching profession, including the number of teachers who receive initial accreditation at either the provisional or conditional level, as well as those who progress to proficient, highly accomplished and lead; the qualifications teachers use as the basis for their initial accreditation, including overseas-trained teachers; those currently on an approved leave of absence from accreditation; those whose accreditation has ceased or been suspended or revoked; and the number who have their accreditation voluntarily cancelled. This data is only a part of the broader teacher workforce supply conversation under consideration in this inquiry.

We do not hold data on initial teacher education commencements or completions in New South Wales. The Commonwealth manages this as part of their responsibilities to universities. The employment data we do hold for government schoolteachers is provided to NESA via a data exchange with the Department of Education. For many casual teachers and all non-government schoolteachers, the employment data we hold is reliant on teachers themselves providing this to NESA in their online account. In all of our work, including reforms to the New South Wales curriculum and our work in implementing recent changes to the Teacher Accreditation Act, we are considering ways to support teachers' workload and, wherever possible, to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens—requirements—while balancing our regulatory functions.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Martin. We will start with questioning from the Hon. Mark Latham.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you, Mr Martin, for your attendance today and the work that you do at NESA. Just to set the scene, I think from this inquiry there are two competing paradigms of what we do about teacher shortages in New South Wales. One put by the Teachers Federation and also a number of academics in the Gallop report is to say, "Reduce workload. Make the job easier. Reduce burnout. Retain more teachers." The second paradigm, that I certainly subscribe to, says, "Upgrade teaching to make it a proper, highly rewarded, accountable, modern profession—challenging, dynamic—in which teachers are constantly upgrading their skills, classroom practice and achievements and professional job satisfaction, and you will attract more talented young people and also retain more teachers." On that second approach, the 2019 Audit Office report was highly critical of the department and NESA about a number of failings. What have you corrected in the three years since? For instance, they said that NESA had no process to ensure school principal decisions to accredit teachers are in line with professional teacher standards. Has that now been fixed?

PAUL MARTIN: Yes. It has been worked on quite consistently since that time. In fact, the changes to the Teacher Accreditation Act that occurred last November gave NESA the responsibility for accrediting classroom teachers, under advice from principals. So the accreditation decision moved from the school to NESA. As a consequence of that, we are in a better position to be able to provide consistent advice, have an overarching assessment of the decisions that are made, provide support for principals and schools in making those decisions,

and streamline the process both for teachers who are gaining accreditation and for principals. So my view is that, yes, we have worked very consistently on trying to make sure that those recommendations are fixed, concluded.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What does NESA do in practice that is different to what the principals have already done and their advice to you?

PAUL MARTIN: In practice, from the moment that we begin the process of accrediting, making the accreditation decision, which begins in November this year, what we will be able to do is make the decisions consistently and provide advice to schools about what minimum proficient standard practice looks like. Quite often principals, with the best of intent, are only able to have an oversight or an understanding or a judgement about proficiency that is limited to the teachers in their schools and not necessarily more broadly, though many principals, of course, have assessed many, many teachers over many, many years and so do that have level of skill. But the point I'm trying to make is that we can provide a much more consistent understanding of what a proficient teacher looks like across schools and across sectors. So my view is that we can assist in that process for principals.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How many times have you rejected the principal's recommendation and said, "No, that accreditation is not valid"?

PAUL MARTIN: Because the process begins one year from the commencement of the Act that was passed last November, we are only beginning that process this year. But in the past we have looked at and contacted schools and principals around the evidence that has been provided to us and the decision that's been made in relation to proficient teachers, and we have provided advice back to schools but not necessarily on a wide basis. That's the sort of work that we'll be commencing from November this year.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Okay, so that's work in progress. The Audit Office also said teachers are not required to produce evidence to demonstrate that their classroom practice aligns with all the standards needed to maintain accreditation. Has that now changed?

PAUL MARTIN: I would argue, with due respect to the Audit Office, it's not necessarily an accurate representation of the proficiency process. Teachers do have to provide evidence. They don't have to provide evidence against each of 37 standards. They provide a sample of evidence—often multiple standards are met within each of those artefacts—so that you can get a holistic view of a teacher's performance. That should include teacher programs, assessment materials, examples of where those things have been taken into account to change a program et cetera. It's not 37 pieces of evidence, which would be ridiculous and onerous, I think, in relation to the teachers' workload as it currently stands, but a representative sample that goes to the heart of the standards that most represent teaching practice. So we do do that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The Audit Office pointed out—and it's certainly a valid and impressive statistic—that Australian research shows that effective feedback on classroom practice can increase teacher effectiveness by up to 30 per cent. But in only 10 of the 130 professional development plans they assessed was there any evidence that the two observations were conducted annually. Is that something that NESA or the department does? Has it changed since the audit report?

PAUL MARTIN: Those things are the responsibility of the employing authorities. Our connection to the assessment or the judgement around teachers is in the articulation of the standards and in evidence that we can provide that shows how you achieve those standards consistently. The manner in which that is manifest in schools is determined partly by the employing authority, the sector, and probably partly by the principal and the supervisor. I think that many more teachers would be observed in their practice than the small number that's represented in that quote.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Okay, well, let's hope so. In your teacher accreditation decisions, do you get the material on these two observations and what was noted about teacher quality in the classroom?

PAUL MARTIN: When the teachers or the schools—in the current system, the decision is made at the school level. We would have the evidence that the school has used to make the decision. Up until relatively recently—and we have gone back to the practice, but we had a hiatus there where we had an IT issue—we would do an audit of the evidence that's provided, and we would report on that evidence back to the system or sector in order for them to improve their processes. We would get audit evidence from the schools around what evidence was used by teachers to demonstrate their proficiency. We would have a look at that, and we would say back to the Department of Education, to the independent sector or to schools that they should think about looking at other types of evidence or they should be increasing this, that or the other. We have worked on that consistently since 2004. We were unable to do that for a couple of years because we had an IT issue, but we've gone back to that process. From November this year we'll be doing that ourselves.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In what proportion of cases of accrediting teachers do you get those classroom feedback reports?

PAUL MARTIN: I wouldn't be able to answer that today, but I'm happy to have a look and take that on notice.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I suppose we're still locked into the industrial relations arrangement whereby the teacher gets to decide who does the classroom observations and the teacher needs to agree to any written feedback before it is then sort of adopted by the system. I suppose we're still stuck with that, are we?

PAUL MARTIN: That depends on the school, the system and the sector. We don't have a direct role there.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The final one I was going to raise was HALT, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers. The numbers seem incredibly paltry. In the CIS presentation and their submission made yesterday, there were eight HALTs in 2022, 29 in 2021 and just 12 in 2020. They say there's only been a net increase of 48 HALTs in the New South Wales school system over the past 11 years, which is just over four extra HALTs per annum. Why has this system been so slow and so difficult to ramp up? Surely, if we want to retain and reward teachers and make this a dynamic, challenging and achieving profession, we need to acknowledge more excellence, don't we?

PAUL MARTIN: I agree with that. I think that the HALT issue has been a vexed one over the course of the establishment of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the NSW Institute of Teachers. In its initial stages, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher processes were not linked to remuneration or any particular conditions or attached to schools. It relied very largely on intrinsic motivation of a group of teachers and, in fact, the standards were very new for most teachers. In fact, for teachers who were teaching at the point of 2004, they had had no engagement with teaching standards till that time. I think there was some reticence and some lack of knowledge in relation to achieving the standards, what sort of evidence you would use and how long it took. I don't think that the previous incarnations of the Institute of Teachers, including my own role in that, gave enough support and guidance to teachers who probably should have been given pathways to Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher. We've been increasing that over time.

We had a moment when the national standards, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, took over the New South Wales standards, and a couple of years of discussion in relation to new national processes and national recognition for HALT. It's been a circuitous route to get to the present. In recent times NESA has, with lots of conversations and consultation with stakeholders, completely changed the process of HALT accreditation. Instead of it being a one-stop, very difficult process, without much signposting, we've made it a modular process. We are now identifying teachers with the support of the independents, Catholics and the government school sector to assist them in achieving HALT. Rather than just leave it to themselves for both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, we're going after people to say, "You should be encouraged to do this". There are conversations and have been award negotiations that have added salaries to HALTs now in two of the three sectors, I think, but I could confirm that on the record. So, yes, it's been too slow, and I think that the pull factor of HALTs as both a career motivation and also for salary is going to be very important going forward. We hope that we're now in a position to be able to encourage that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you very much.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can I just ask one follow-up to that one? Thanks very much for your time, Mr Martin. The New South Wales Government has had a series of different programs. HALT has always been operating in the background, but they've had Best in Class and all kinds of different programs designed to recognise excellent teachers. But HALT is the only one that has funding and results in an increased remuneration. Is that correct?

PAUL MARTIN: I'm not exactly sure. I think that each of the three sectors has ways of recognising outstanding teaching, and potentially within their award or staffing structures have master teachers, HALTs, exemplary teachers or Best in Class—various names. Right around the country they have those as well. HALT is the only one that's attached to a set of objective standards, and it's the only one that is nationally recognised. One of the things we're trying to do at the moment, with strong support from the New South Wales Government, is to draw up and recognise those who have completed other methodologies for recognising excellence into the HALT program, but I couldn't tell you what the rewards were or what the salaries were for those other groups. Every single time someone does a review of education in New South Wales, they suggest that excellent teachers be paid more. Quite often there is another methodology for recognising them, and that's called something similar to those things. I think we're in a position now where we're really able to link all of those things with the HALT process, including announcements made by the New South Wales Government last Friday.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Has the New South Wales Government ever asked you to reduce the administrative burdens in order to apply for the HALT program? I understand that there's an application fee and that it's quite an extensive process. Have they ever asked you to reduce those?

PAUL MARTIN: Yes, the current New South Wales Government, the current Minister, has asked us to look at all of our practices that are unnecessarily onerous or where the artefact or the work doesn't lead to an improvement, materially, in the point of the exercise. With HALT, simultaneous to current arguments around teacher workload, we were trying to streamline the process to encourage people to enter it anyway, so it has coincided with both requests to simplify and reduce workload and with our own desire to get more teachers into HALT.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm happy if you want to provide them on notice, but we've got eight HALTs in 2022, nine accredited in 2021 and 12 in 2020 according to Mr Latham. Are you able to provide the number of applications for each of those years on notice?

PAUL MARTIN: Yes, I am.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How long does it take? How many hours of work is involved from NESA in terms of actually approving? Is it something that takes weeks, so it takes a lot of staff time, or is it something that you can turn around reasonably quickly?

PAUL MARTIN: I'll just generalise that the process up until the last couple of years at our end, at the assessment end, was quite significant. We would have a team of assessors come in, largely representative of the sectors and of excellence and principals et cetera, and they would make judgments about the portfolios that teachers had put in to apply for the HALT accreditation. Sometimes those processes would last not just a morning but a day to make appropriate judgments. I think it is reasonable to say that between 2004 and relatively recently, we made the process too convoluted and we put too much emphasis on the establishment of the quality standard, when we could have probably done things a lot more simply. We're in the process of doing it now, both in the application—as I said, modular, assisting teachers to do it and providing them with guidance—and in our own assessments.

The ACTING CHAIR: Sorry to jump in again, Abigail. We will get to Abigail. But directly from that, what's your time frame in terms of when you expect to have the system streamlined and changed?

PAUL MARTIN: It's already been announced; it's in train now. We're in the process of working with sectors to try and identify teachers who we can encourage through the pipeline so we can get as many HALTs as possible. I have to say—and it's a default excuse—the last couple of years have been difficult in a range of ways for teachers going through processes like HALT because of COVID. A lot of teachers who had begun the system paused their application processes, so some of the data that you've indicated—not all, but some of the reason is the COVID pandemic.

The ACTING CHAIR: So would we expect to it see it live for 2023?

PAUL MARTIN: Yes, absolutely. In fact, the Minister has given us some very strong targets about the numbers of teachers that she wants through the HALT process in the next few years.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Boyd?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you, Chair. My goodness, I'm patient. Hello and thank you for your appearance today. I also want to ask about the HALT program but from a slightly different angle. From what I just heard there are 29 in the last three years. What is the gender breakdown of those? Do you know?

PAUL MARTIN: I will answer that on notice. Given the fact that I attend the presentation ceremonies, they're overwhelmingly women and there is a significant proportion of primary school teachers over secondary.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If you could perhaps, on notice, provide both as a percentage of applications, so of people who originally begin the process, how many of them go through to getting the accreditation as a percentage on gender basis as well but also the percentage that that represents of total teachers as well, so not just the raw numbers, although there may be more women than men. I'm curious as to how that works out in terms of percentages. I've heard anecdotally that the process can be quite difficult for anyone who takes any time out from teaching to have children or to do other things, so I'm just curious as to how it impacts on the gender. Have you done anything from a gender lens perspective to try to ensure that the processes are as accessible as possible for women?

PAUL MARTIN: Yes, I think that the modular approach we have instituted is quite deliberately designed to cope with the fact that 70 per cent of people in my profession are women. They take breaks of service. They require an adaptation of some of our rules and systems in order for them to be able to given equal access.

The modular process means that teachers can fulfil a section of the requirements of HALT accreditation, send that to us, bank it beyond maternity leave or simply have a number of children and a family life that requires them to have a break from trying to fulfil our requirements for a while, and then put in a second application and so on. That process that we've recently gone public on is designed to be more amenable to the numbers of women in the profession.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We heard yesterday from the Science Teachers Association—apologies, I'm sure I've got that name wrong, but from the science teachers—saying there was a huge percentage of teachers when they surveyed, I think it was like 87 per cent that said that someone other than a science teacher had taught a science class in their school in the last week, which was quite an alarming statistic. Does NESA do anything to ensure that specialist subjects are being taught by teachers with the right qualifications? What sort of oversight do you have of that? Is there a process for ensuring that?

PAUL MARTIN: When teachers apply to NESA for accreditation one of the things we do is we ascertain from their qualifications what they are coded or trained to teach—English, history, maths, science, whatever— majors and minors, and that's an important part of what we do because we of course assess overseas teachers and interstate teachers for the same purposes. However the employment decision is made at a school of who gets to teach what class. It is made by the school, made by the independent, the Catholic or the government school. It's not something that we have oversight of. What we do is establish what they're trained to teach in the first instance.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So there is no requirement. For example, I can imagine there would be problems if there were, but I just want to clarify there's no requirement that only a science teacher teaches science, for instance, from a NESA level. It's a per school—

PAUL MARTIN: No, not from a NESA perspective.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I've been listening to your evidence, Mr Martin. Yesterday we heard evidence around the narrative of teacher accountability and it strikes me that NESA is one of the key agencies for pursuing the narrative around teacher accountability, particularly this sense in the general discourse around education that teachers can't be trusted, that principals can't be trusted. Earlier you said in your evidence that NESA was better placed than principals to make judgments about the proficiency of teachers. Doesn't that just confirm that your agency is actually part of the problem, not part of the solution, to the teacher supply crisis? Because you're imposing these accountability measures rather than trusting those who are at the coalface, the teachers and the principals, who are best placed to make judgments like the ones around proficiency. What do you say to that, Mr Martin?

PAUL MARTIN: There are a number of parts of the question that I'll attempt to answer. I would not suggest that NESA is part of the accountability process. We're a regulator. There are many ways to regulate schools and teachers and initial teacher education providers and PD providers, and we have some level of regulation there. We're not a regulator that is in any way attempting to have a sort of punishing oversight. What we do is largely educative, to bring people to what we believe we understand is the proficiency standard or the other standards of teachers. When I indicated earlier that we're better placed than some principals to have a sense of proficiency, my argument would be that we have a scope and a reach that allows us to see 4,000 or 5,000 or 6,000 teachers, beginning teachers, in any given year rather than the one or two that might be in a school.

Under no circumstances would I ever suggest that a principal or a classroom teacher or a supervisor or an AP or a head of department is not in a better position to understand the day-to-day work of a teacher than NESA. They are always in a better position to do that. What we do is take into account the advice they give us. We take into account the evidence that they have provided and we provide support back to them to indicate to them where we think that evidence could be better substantiated or whether in fact it might be absolutely perfect. What we attempt to do is support and help the achievement of the standards rather than have some sort of accountability oversight. In fact I would suggest that NESA is so far remote from the day-to-day work of the teachers that we have to rely almost entirely, as we should, on the people who are working with teachers.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: If you're so remote, aren't you just a redundant layer of bureaucracy? You have indicated about providing evidence to NESA, principals providing evidence based on their sign off of accreditation. What is the purpose of that if not to add to the burden that's placed on teachers to indicate that we can't trust a principal's judgment? Can you see the problem with the approach that's been taken here?

PAUL MARTIN: I'm not sure how we can be responsible both for an oversight of restrictive accountability and also be too remote and redundant at the same time. What I think we have is in fact the balance between those two extremes. We need to be able to take advice from principals, and from teachers and supervisors, about the quality of the professionals and the practitioners in their schools. What I'm talking about here is the

proficiency standard; these are the teachers in their first three years of their teaching. We have almost no relationship or responsibility for the day-to-day work of teachers; that is left to the school. All those teachers who have achieved proficiency—and in the past you got your teaching certificate, so a similar process has existed for many, many years. What we do is provide evidence that gets some level of consistency across and between and within schools for a process that pre-existed and we use the teaching standards to do that.

We have very little relationship in terms of the oversight of the day-to-day practice of teachers who have already achieved proficiency, which is 95 per cent of the teaching workforce. All we do in relation to those teachers is make sure that they complete the required 100 hours of PD over five years. But we do take a closer look at those teachers in the first three years of their teaching because we think it's very, very important that we make sure that those teachers reach that proficiency standard, and we try and help principals and schools and supervisors as much as possible in that process. From my perspective, the balance is about right, though always able to be shifted based on feedback and discussion and consultation, and strong representation from both unions and principals and other employing authorities.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Have you done any assessment in terms of the time taken to assemble portfolio evidence to establish proficiency? How much time would you expect that a teacher would have to spend assembling that information?

PAUL MARTIN: We're not as concerned so much about the amount of time—and I'll come back to that so that it doesn't sound like a bold statement—assembling the information. Teachers should be able to draw, from their day-to-day practice in their first three years of teaching, evidence that meets our requirements. We're only talking about seven or eight pieces of evidence here. We're not talking about 37 standards. It's a very small number of pieces of evidence and, as I would suggest, similar to what existed prior to the establishment of the Institute of Teachers, in other former processes. But we've regulated it and made it more consistent. In terms of how long, teachers have up to three years to meet proficiency. Most of them meet proficiency in the first year or 18 months, very early on, similar to previous generations. But I think there is sometimes a misunderstanding—and that is possibly a communications issue from NESA—that you have to assemble a portfolio. Teachers should be able to draw, from their practice over the course of their first year of teaching, enough evidence without doing any additional work, upload it onto a very simple system at NESA and achieve that level of proficiency.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask about maintenance, then? Is there not a similar evidentiary requirement for maintenance? Or are you saying that it's just the 100 hours over five years and that's enough to tick it off?

PAUL MARTIN: When the Institute of Teachers first started in 2004, we only accredited teachers who were employed from that time. So there were 4,000 in the first year and then another 4,000 or so, which made it eight, and so on and so forth. When we first started off, we had a process of the hundred hours to maintain your accreditation over five years, and then teachers at the end of that five years used to write a report, an accreditation report—a reflection of their teaching over the five years. Over time, we realised that that was an unnecessary burden. It might have made some teachers think about their practice more or whatever, but we didn't find that we were materially assisting in the process of proficiency, so we got rid of it.

At some point in the last decade, there were changes in New South Wales in terms of Commonwealth requirements for funding that required the institution of various consistent performance and development processes across schools and systems across the country. That broke down; it didn't particularly eventuate. But there were elements where schools made judgements about the ongoing proficiency of teachers—their ongoing work. We removed all of our requirements for teachers' ongoing demonstration of proficiency and simply allow the schools to tell us that—whatever processes they currently use, whatever practice they currently use, we're happy to accept. Proficiency for ongoing maintenance for a teacher relies on the hundred hours over five years and their principal or supervisor pressing a button on our NESA portal to say that the teacher continues to be proficient.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask about the hundred hours? Is it the case that many teachers are actually exceeding the hundred hours?

PAUL MARTIN: I will take that on notice, but I think we have some data that teachers do more than double 100 hours over five years. Our requirement is a lot less than the actual PD that teachers do, yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I think last year you made a decision around cancelling the recognition of a whole range of courses that contributed to the hundred hours. It seems to me that that has now created an issue for teachers in terms of finding courses that meet the accreditation requirements. I'll give you an example. I understand that the child protection training that's delivered within the Department of Education is not an accredited course. It's being done. It's obviously something that needs to be done by teachers. It takes time and

it takes them away from other things. Shouldn't something like that count towards accreditation, and why doesn't it?

PAUL MARTIN: It does count towards accreditation. As far as I understand—and I'll take that on notice to clarify anything I may be mistaken in—it doesn't count towards the teachers' priority PD hours that they need to do, which have a set of parameters around them. I would make the point that the department, the independents and the Catholics are allowed to accredit their own PD. NESA has given them the permission to accredit their own PD, so the department can make decisions appropriately about which PD it accredits as PD. But, in terms of the nature of some professional development like work health and safety or child protection or anaphylactic shock issues et cetera, they can all still be counted, but they are counted as part of the teachers' elective hours rather than the priority PD that has been determined to sit in much more close relationship with the actual practice of teaching and learning—for example, curriculum, assessment, teaching students with special needs, teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those areas are where the priority PD is situated. Teachers can still count all of those other areas of PD, but it's determined to be elective PD.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It does create an issue, doesn't it? My understanding is that most teachers find it relatively easy to meet those hours that aren't within that category that you've just identified. It's that narrower category that's actually quite hard for teachers to achieve the necessary hours, and the time is not necessarily made available by the systems that are employing the teachers. Is there not something that NESA can do about that?

PAUL MARTIN: Look, it's a very good question. When we first disestablished or ended the accreditation of many PD providers, there was an obvious question that for 140,000-odd teachers to be able to complete 50 hours of priority professional learning, we needed to be able to have that available for them. You can't make a requirement for something and then not allow them the capacity to complete it. So we have accredited a very large number of courses in those areas and the sectors themselves have been able to do that. It's also the case, Mr D'Adam, that as the syllabuses roll out as part of the curriculum review—K to 2 English and maths are out; 3 to 10 English and maths will be out next year, then so on and so forth—the level of professional learning attached to the syllabuses will be of significant benefit in teachers meeting those hours. But I make the point and the commitment that were there to be an issue in terms of the availability of PD that may impact on a teacher's capacity to maintain their accreditation, that would be NESA's responsibility, and we would need to do everything we could, both for any individual teacher and collectively for the profession, to make sure they had sufficient PD.

The CHAIR: Last question, Anthony.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: If I've only got one more question, then I'll ask this question: There are clearly instances where HSC candidates are being taught by non-subject specialists. That clearly has an educational impact; it places them at a disadvantage. What is NESA doing to address that issue in terms of the potential ramifications and implications for those students who are placed at a disadvantage in the HSC because the department or the sector can't actually place in front of those kids a teacher who has the proper expertise to deliver that course?

PAUL MARTIN: NESA runs the rules and the conduct of the HSC. We control the syllabuses, obviously, and they are under review at the moment. We provide advice to schools, generally speaking, about the number and the timing and the weighting of assessment tasks. We conduct the written examinations. Then we are responsible for the HSC results and provide information to UAC, the Universities Admissions Centre, for the ATAR. What we have no control over and cannot realistically have control over is the nature of the teaching and learning that occurs in 800-odd high schools across New South Wales, where there are differences between the capacity of the students and the experience and knowledge of the teachers, irrespective of whether they are teaching in or outside of their subject area.

My point is that we can only control and be as fair, reasonable, equitable and transparent as possible over the timing and the conduct of both the syllabuses and the exam. We have to rely on the schools and the teachers to teach those students adequately in preparation. In any given year, there are students who are probably better prepared than others on the basis of their teacher. Having said all that, it's my view that every single year 12 teacher that I've ever encountered in my visits to schools and in their work with NESA is utterly committed to their students doing the HSC. It's a source of great pride for them and they work extremely hard to get those students across the finish line.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can I just ask a follow-up question to that? You said that obviously some students are going to be better prepared than others. We heard from the Science Teachers Association, in fact, that if you don't have that broader knowledge and understanding and if you aren't trained in that particular subject that you are teaching, students won't have a broader understanding and will find it difficult

to understand or conceptualise the more difficult concepts. Is a student who is taught in their HSC by a teacher not trained in that particular subject area eligible to apply for educational disadvantage?

PAUL MARTIN: There is no category for a student to be able to apply to NESA to have a consideration of their mark because of the nature of the teaching. We have to be able to—there is too much variability and too much difference within schools and between schools, even for teachers who are trained in the subject area or not trained, whatever. We rely on schools to deliver that. There isn't a capacity for poor teaching or untrained teaching, no.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will quickly ask one more question. My colleague Mr D'Adam did excellent research and asked some questions on notice to see the attrition rates of teachers and the number of teachers who are actually leaving from an accreditation perspective. Can you just give us the latest figures, if possible, today or on notice, about the accredited teachers for this year, this month and then for the same month over the past two years?

PAUL MARTIN: I'm happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Firstly, I apologise for my late interjection to the Committee. It's not because this isn't a priority. There were a few things I couldn't move, including a heavy fog over Griffith this morning. I apologise for that. I apologise if this ground has been covered, but I just want to fact-check a few things I'm hearing about accreditation, particularly for teachers reaching the end of their career. They might have been teaching for 30 years and are not teaching full-time but are a valuable resource as a casual teacher and are finding it difficult, too hard or too much work to keep up accreditation. I assume it is that 100 hours of PD over five years. Is that something that we are hearing elsewhere? Is it something that we can address? These are people, as I say, who might have been teaching for 30 or 40 years. I'm thinking of other aspects of it as well. It may be a teacher who is working for a family business and does the odd day here and there. Is that something you have come across? Are there ways that we can get around that?

PAUL MARTIN: It's a very difficult policy issue. Teachers who are casual teachers or temporary teachers have an additional two years to complete the hours, straight up. They get seven hours instead of five hours. We do a lot of encouragement of principals and schools to include their casuals as part of their PD offerings. Casuals are essential to teaching continuity. They are central to it and have always been. There has always been a large cohort that keeps schools going. Apart from the additional two years to complete the hours, we encourage schools to take responsibility for their valued casuals, to look after them and to include them in their school development days or in PD offerings.

We don't think it's a reasonable policy to remove the requirement for PD for people who are in front of students. As Ms Houssos or Mr D'Adam asked, they may be teaching year 12 subjects and they need the PD. We can't say, "Because you're a casual or a temporary, you shouldn't have to do the PD." We have to accommodate the material needs that they have. We have plenty of PD offerings—and have had and will have more—on our website online. I think obviously the place to go in the future is online PD for rural and remote teachers and even teachers who have so many other issues in their lives so they can't necessarily be doing things on weekends or after work.

We have to make sure the offerings are there, either from NESA or commissioning PD. We will adapt our policies to make sure that that workforce is looked after as far as is necessary. We already have a number of cases where we try and look after them. It's also the case that we case-manage teachers. When they call into NESA and say that they have had difficulty, like an issue with their family or a range of other personal circumstances, we are not a rigid accountability mechanism. We will make sure that those people are looked after. We do that. As far as broad policy goes, they get seven instead of five years and we encourage principals and try to get as much PD out into those areas as possible.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: My follow-up question was going to be about online access for people in remote or rural areas but you have touched on that.

PAUL MARTIN: If I could supplement a little bit.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Please do.

PAUL MARTIN: With the curriculum review, we have a new online curriculum and syllabus delivery process—an online capacity—that will be significantly enhanced with lessons and support materials. We have entered into a relationship with the Assessment Resource Centre at Sydney university. What we are trying to do is upscale our capacity to deliver PD for the teachers that you're talking about.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Martin, Ms Houssos alluded to my questions that I asked on notice and then followed up on in estimates where, correct me if I'm wrong, you downplayed the extent of the

exits that occurred between 2020 and 2021, when almost 10,000 teachers ceased to hold accreditation. I suppose the real question is: Do you agree that we are haemorrhaging teachers in New South Wales?

PAUL MARTIN: In terms of data on teachers moving out of the profession, it's often difficult to identify the causes or the reasons why teachers move. There is a lot of conversation and rumour about the proportions and numbers. We have, over the last 10 or 15 years, had probably quite large groups of teachers moving out of teaching partly as part of the shift of baby boomer teachers out of the profession. There was a peak a number of years ago and there are still groups of teachers who are simply retiring. Many of them sign on immediately as casual teachers and some of them, in the last year under COVID pressures, have come back in and assisted in schools as teachers. A large proportion of teachers who finish up every year or cease accreditation are simply retirements.

The data that we have doesn't show anything like 50 per cent of teachers moving out of teaching in their first five years, which is something that I read in the paper and even heard anecdotally from somebody yesterday. It is a much lower number than that. It's very hard to identify when a teacher moves out of accreditation whether—sometimes it's retirement, sometimes it's other reasons, sometimes they have gone overseas and sometimes they decide not to be a teacher. But the proportions are certainly not anything like the one in two that occasionally gets used.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You are in the box seat. You are the ones who are collecting the data. You know who is flowing into the system and who is flowing out. Isn't it your job to make sure that we understand that we have enough teachers coming through and being accredited to meet the needs of the system?

PAUL MARTIN: There's a difference between having the numbers and the data that we have and—as I indicated earlier, some of it comes directly from the system, like the department, and some of it from teachers telling us. We can't force them to tell us why they are no longer teaching. We provide opportunities for them to give us that information, but we can't force them. There is a difference between gathering the data and being responsible for the relationship between supply and demand in teaching. We work with the sectors and attempt to identify what we can do as a go-between, with universities et cetera, around areas of shortage and need. We have a role in that debate, but it's not our responsibility.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I'm not saying you have a role to come up with a policy solution. I'm saying you are the one with the finger on the pulse and you are able to assess whether we have a problem or not. You are seeing whether people are exiting the profession or whether sufficient numbers are entering. That data and analysis is your job, isn't it? You should be front and centre in terms of being able to confirm whether there is a problem. I suppose my question is: I presented those figures to you in estimates—10,000 between 2020 and 2021—and that's a problem, isn't it?

PAUL MARTIN: It may be a problem, depending on the reason for the teachers moving out.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Martin, surely you should be able to make an unequivocal statement about whether you think 10,000 people leaving the profession is a problem.

PAUL MARTIN: It would depend entirely, Mr D'Adam, on the reasons why and the relationship, in particular, to the retirement group. That is the piece that is unknown from my perspective now. We have a large group of retirees every single year and I wouldn't call that a problem in terms of teacher supply and demand. A large and growing group of teachers who left accreditation or left teaching that were outside of that group would, of course, indicate that there are issues in relation to teaching as a career or the other options for people with a teaching degree. The Australian Government has more recently taken up responsibility for the Australian Teacher Workforce Data set, which gives us much more comprehensive supply and demand data. They not only have our data and the State's data in relation to teaching, but they have the commencement and conclusion or completion data from the universities that they have responsibility for. The sort of picture that you are indicating is necessary for good policy work is being compiled through that Australian Teacher Workforce Data set. We have a part to play in that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: The CIS submission suggested that you were routinely doing analyses of the early career exits; is that correct? Do you do that analysis on a routine basis?

PAUL MARTIN: I wouldn't call it analysis, necessarily, but we have the numbers and look at the numbers of teachers who are entering qualifications annually. Yes, we do.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So you are looking at how many people are entering the profession as—what's the entry criteria? Is it contingent? No.

PAUL MARTIN: The conditional pathway?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Conditional approval, yes. So you are looking at the numbers who are going in on conditional approval.

PAUL MARTIN: We are facilitating that process. We are making sure that it is easier.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You are then looking at the numbers of that cohort who are still there in five years' time. Is that not something you are doing on a routine basis?

PAUL MARTIN: We do it in relation to some of the policy work that we do. We certainly do it in providing advice or information to the department or the sectors and to the Australian Government, as I said, and AITSL and a variety of other areas. As far as a policy unit that is looking at the data as part of their normal business, no.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You don't have that capacity in NESA?

PAUL MARTIN: No, we don't. Interestingly, though, Mr D'Adam, the relationship between the numbers coming into the profession under the conditional pathway in order for those teachers to enter teaching sooner rather than provisional—when they have completed their qualification—is something we are looking at because of the effects of COVID and trying to get teachers into schools as quickly as possible. But as a part of routine policy, no.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: In preparation for attending today, did you have a look at the figures? Earlier in your evidence you suggested that the exits of early career teachers was not as bad as it had been portrayed in the media. You clearly have some data that you are relying on. Can you provide that to the Committee?

PAUL MARTIN: I have a few different pieces of data. Some of it is from 2020. I am happy to provide it on notice rather than put it on the record when I haven't had enough of an opportunity to ascertain its veracity. I would prefer to put that on notice, if that's okay.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Of course.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Mr Martin, how long have you been in your role? How long have you been with NESA?

PAUL MARTIN: This is my third year as the substantive CEO. I spent a year as acting CEO. Prior to that, I worked in NESA, BOSTES.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Obviously when official accreditation and those sorts of things came in, it increased the burden or workload for teachers. I have picked up on a few things you have said, "We've streamlined that", "We've made that easier" and "We've moved that burden". Is that trend on its way back down now, where this process has become easier?

PAUL MARTIN: I think we have made significant moves. Some of them Mr Latham referred to in an audit report from a couple of years ago. Some of it is because of our forums, like the board itself, which has representation from three sectors, both unions and a range of principals. We have pretty robust interaction with the teaching workforce and we have been told that we need to do some work. The Government has also been very keen to make sure that any administrative burden is reduced. I would say that for a teacher in their first three years of teaching, there is something of a burden to demonstrate your proficiency, and I wouldn't apologise for it. Teachers after that have to complete their hundred hours. I would also not apologise for the fact that keeping up to date with your profession is a reasonable thing, similar to doctors, engineers and lawyers.

Beyond that, the requirements from NESA for an established proficient classroom teacher are very small. All we do is take on advice from schools that the processes they are using for their purposes, we will accept. We don't have any specific identified processes for teachers after they have achieved proficiency, other than the 100 hours. The only thing we require is the principal to check on our portal that a teacher continues to meet the standards. I think there is a lot of work that teachers are doing in schools, as a result of processes of performance audits and various things, where the teaching standards are being used. Where teaching standards are in play, people assume that it's a NESA requirement when, in fact, it's something that a school or system would do as a matter of their normal processes to make sure that their teachers are continuing to be adequate for their purposes. Having said that, anything that teachers tell us is a problem, is unnecessary or is bureaucratic, we will of course have a look at it and attempt to reduce it.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: My next question was going to be about the feedback. How are teachers telling you that this is or isn't working or the workload is too high?

PAUL MARTIN: I made the point a second ago that teachers often, I think, mistake anything they have—

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Sorry, I mean: What is that process? How are you getting that feedback, not what is the feedback? How do you engage with the teachers?

PAUL MARTIN: Apart from direct relationships with the representative organisations, who are reasonably robust and clear about what they tell us in feedback—

The ACTING CHAIR: I can't imagine.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are a diplomat as always, Paul.

PAUL MARTIN: We also have a reasonably robust online and phone capacity. I have to say that, and I'll be honest, one of the criticisms we sometimes get is that it's hard to get through to NESA. There are 140,000 accredited teachers and there are 25 or 30 people answering phones. We do our best. We get a lot of feedback from that. Teachers are, as this Committee is aware, unhappy and tired, and they see NESA's work as unnecessary sometimes. We know that from, as I said, online and phone calls, from our communications processes with our committee structures. It's not hard.

I spoke to and visited a school last Friday afternoon. It was all of the heads of department of a government school on the northern beaches. I speak to AHISA principals, independent heads of schools in New South Wales. I have regular meetings with the P&C and with the independent and Catholic parents. NESA's great strength, I would argue, immodestly, is that we are a stakeholder organisation that listens to its stakeholders. At the moment, a lot of the feedback we are getting is really negative about the amount of work that teachers are doing. Sometimes it's a little frustrating because we feel that it's not our expectations that teachers are reacting to. Having said that, we have to listen. We have as many channels open as we can.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Martin. That brings us to the conclusion of this session. If Committee members have additional questions, they will place them to you after the hearing. The Committee has resolved that answers to these along with any answers to questions taken on notice must be returned within 21 days of the receipt of the transcript. The secretariat will contact you about that. Thank you again. The Committee will break for lunch and return at 2.30 p.m. with Professor John Hattie.

(The witness withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

Mr JOHN HATTIE, Emeritus Laureate Professor, University of Melbourne School of Education and Chair, Board of the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The ACTING CHAIR: Professor, would you like to start by making a short opening statement for the Committee or would you like to go into questions?

JOHN HATTIE: I would like just to phrase some comments if I may, please.

The ACTING CHAIR: You are very welcome to.

JOHN HATTIE: I really want to make four major points to your submission, given your lengthy terms of reference. The first is a need to recognise the changing nature of the profession and its roles. Secondly, the fundamental issue at the moment, I would argue, is less about supply and demand and much more about retention and attraction. The evidence that I certainly have says that teachers stay in schools because of students and they leave because of leaders. Fundamentally, I would argue we need a national, not just a State, but a national working group to resolve the many interrelated messages and to build a sustained evidence-based enhancement of the esteem and expertise of the profession. So, I'm happy to elaborate on any of those issues, but I think I just make those comments to start with and then come back to you.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you, Professor Hattie, for your submission and your time today. I suppose a starting point is defining the problem that we've got. We heard yesterday from the Centre for Independent Studies, who said effectively there's no real pipeline problem of teachers coming through the system, it's more the number of unfilled vacancies that we have for particular reasons in the New South Wales public education system. But in your submission, and your role as the main authority on workforce data, here at pages 10 and 11 with postgraduate entries down 13 per cent and undergraduate entries down 22 per cent, it does point to pipeline issues, doesn't it?

JOHN HATTIE: Yes, I think there are, particularly, and extremely so, in the early childhood sector. The workforce commission already identifies 16,000 vacancies by the end of this year. That's to say, yes, there is a pipeline issue. Yes, there are issues with respect to those commencements you talked about, but then we have to also take into account that of the 90,000-plus people that are in initial teacher education at the moment—and I also note that there are actually more in maths and science than there are in English and arts—I also note that 25 per cent complete an ITE program completely online. So, it clearly is now becoming more of a national issue, given that there are many students in New South Wales intending to work in New South Wales, but doing courses online elsewhere. But also that less than half those who start initial teacher education complete, and less than half those who do complete get a full-time job position. So, in one sense, yes, there is the pipeline problem. There is a problem in terms of how we get the workforce and understand why we have these barriers to meeting the demand. I also point out that, sadly, we do not have a lot of information on demand data in Australia and I think that would help us dramatically answer and address what I think is the core to your question.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Another pressure in New South Wales we've got is the Government's ambition to have universal four-year-old preschool education in New South Wales. But with those shortages in early childhood educators in the pipeline it's not going to happen any time soon, is it?

JOHN HATTIE: Well, your plan is to have it by 2025, if I recall correctly. That's not going to happen soon unless there is a major looking at how we're going to deal with that sector. I don't think for a moment that this is the time to blink on quality either.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Just turning to page 8 of your submission in terms of incentives to attract candidates, your conclusion is that money does get a result. The Grattan Institute survey, and then I think even more compellingly, the BETA $30,000 scholarship idea, what is the level of a scholarship that will achieve the best result for us? Is it the $10,000 or $30,000 or somewhere in between?

JOHN HATTIE: I will answer that slightly differently. I think the biggest issue we have in terms of attraction to the profession is not the starting salary, the par starting salary in Australia of all professions, it's what happens about ten years into the profession, whereas the Grattan data set shows, and many data sets show, it goes very flat. It's not a great incentive to join a profession where after 10 years you are going to struggle with people who come through with similar qualifications in other jobs. The other thing we have to be a little bit wary about is that in the past many of those scholarships to enter teacher education have gone to those that were already going to enter, so it has not dramatically changed the numbers that we had. If we had better demand data, that would help us, I think, work out where we need to put some of those scholarships. As to the amount the Grattan has shown and the other studies have shown, is that 10 to 20 to 30 can make that difference. But there's not a lot of evidence that it is going to necessarily increase the numbers in the areas we want to the degree we want it to.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But in saying they're in out-of-field teaching problem areas that the scholarships wouldn't achieve the result, how else can we get more maths and science teachers unless we get them on scholarships early or with career changes?

JOHN HATTIE: Well, again, we actually have more maths and science students in our current teacher education programs than our English and arts students. But that doesn't translate them into getting jobs. Attracting more in isn't necessarily the problem, it is how do you make sure that we are graduating them and that we are giving them those jobs. Most of them are in their first five years on short-term contracts, which is not a great incentive for them to stay in the profession. I don't want to portray, however, Mr Latham, that there is one answer here. I do think that, yes, there is an argument for having scholarships.

There is an argument for looking at why it is that the graduation rate is so low, particularly compared to other professions. I think there is an argument about why it is that those students who are graduating in some of those areas are not finding jobs, not finding it attractive to stay in the profession. That's why I'd be certainly looking at a national quality assurance role for some group to oversee these problems. Because at the moment they seem to get dealt with in little pockets everywhere and we don't have a very good system. The Australian Teacher Workforce Data is exposing many of these issues, but then the next question is what do we do about it?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: This Committee, pretty consistently, has heard a lot of evidence about the workload issues, burnout, too much work and the answer is seen to make the job easier with less administrative workload, in particular. But what is the sort of person who is most likely to want to be a dynamic, high-achieving teacher? Do they really want to go into a profession where it is seen, certainly across public opinion, that 12 weeks annual holiday and working nine to three—that's the perception—that the conditions are already pretty good, now the answer is to make the job easier? Are we really going to attract dynamic, ambitious, high-achieving young people with that sort of sales pitch?

JOHN HATTIE: I would add to that sales pitch in a negative way also, is that the current structure of our careers in teaching is based more on experience and age than it is on expertise. That is not a very attractive way to attract people into a profession. But then when it comes to the workload, I think we need to be very, very careful here. I know it's a highly weaponised set of arguments. Certainly, I have been involved in supervising a PhD thesis on teacher attrition and teacher retention. He looked at 70-odd factors, he did a mass of meta analysis, he did a massive study of surveying teachers across Australia and the bottom line is that teachers stay in the profession because of students. They leave because of leaders.

So then we come to workload. I acknowledge teachers are incredibly hardworking and you do not, should not, want to come into this profession until you're hardworking—unless you're prepared to be a hard worker. I do notice that about 40 per cent of their time is spent face-to-face teaching, 26 per cent of their time is planning, 16 per cent is marking, 14 per cent is student supervision and counselling, 8 per cent is communication with parents, 7 per cent is extracurricular and 15 per cent is general administration. When people talk about workload, I want them to understand that that's the nature of the job. There isn't a lot of extra stuff. Further, there's not a lot of evidence that those who leave the profession and those who stay in the profession differ in what their workload is. It is their coping strategies to deal with that workload.

I think that's the real issue here. We need to train people how to do that coping. I know from my own experience of being a dean of education, it's what I don't do and what I choose not to do as well that allows me to do my job. One of the hardest things in this business is getting schools and teachers to stop some things. De-implementation is a major issue. I think we need to be careful with workload. For those who leave, of course they're going to claim it's workload. Those who stay—workload is an issue. But it's the coping strategies to deal with it. We have so many excellent teachers in our system who have the same workload as those who choose to leave. I just want to be a little bit more careful with using workload as the reason.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That's a very valuable observation. What about the changing nature of teaching? The wellbeing agenda now in many schools overwhelms what we used to think of as academic achievement. I spoke not long ago to a bunch of fairly bright school leavers and said, "How would you feel about going into teaching?" They said, "You've got to be kidding, that's like social work. We're going out to make some money and do something a bit more challenging than social work." In all the talk about status of teaching, isn't that a factor? I mean, I don't see a lot of evidence that schools have an evidence base for being effective in teaching wellbeing. They're trained in maths and literacy and other areas, not necessarily as medicos. But the whole wellbeing emphasis has changed the impression of what a school is and perhaps it's that social work image that's got some young people thinking it's not for them.

JOHN HATTIE: There is that image that it is social work. There is a feminisation issue in terms of how people see the profession. Those things can get in the way of people coming in. On the other hand, it can be a way of attracting some kinds of people into the profession. The issue about the wellbeing has certainly been

amplified during COVID. I would argue it's always been there, but it's been highlighted more recently. Schools certainly have been asked over the last few decades to take on so much more responsibility. That was never the case. I'm not sure about you, but certainly my teachers called me by my last name. They didn't know me as a person. It wasn't part of their responsibility. If I had personal crises, it was seen as something handled by the family or outside. That is not true anymore, for better or worse. I think it's probably for the better.

My question is: How do you have the resources for teachers to be used, particularly in some of those cases? When I look at the Australian longitudinal study, 9 per cent of kids are classified with major depression and anxiety issues. Yes, we need resources for those students, but there are many, many other students that have their daily crises and their daily problems et cetera. Teachers know that that's a critical part of building relationships. They know that, as part of their kids. I think the other issue in this is that the nature of those coming into teaching, now it's a second or third job. The average age of entering teacher education is 26. Becoming a teacher for the first time is 30, 31.

We do ask those people who have been through other jobs, who have seen the same kind of social and emotional issues, but it's in your face when you're in the classroom with the number of students you have. I would argue that we have, again, some stunning, excellent, guardrail teachers throughout New South Wales that are dealing with this. But I'm with you when you say that it's an extra responsibility and sometimes I wonder why we have placed so much responsibility on schools to deal with this and not provide the resources that help teachers do their job.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Finally, can I raise the issue of teacher quality and job satisfaction? Professor Hattie, your research—and common sense—indicates that the feedback loop is very important for classroom observation, especially helping new teachers with improving their practice and performance, getting that constant loop of feedback for how they can upgrade what they're doing. We had an Auditor-General's report in New South Wales three years ago that said, of the schools they sampled, less than 10 per cent were doing the two supposedly mandatory classroom observations per annum. It was a pretty dismal outlook for the type of feedback quality and even effort that teachers are getting. For job satisfaction, don't we need that feedback loop? Obviously if you're improving your performance and your students are going better, you're happier in your work, aren't you, and less likely to leave?

JOHN HATTIE: A further part of that is that those who are doing a great job are the ones that usually often gain so much from being told every now and then they're doing a great job. If it isn't happening in the schools, I think that we are diminishing our responsibilities and our impact that we want to attain on our teachers. I'm a very big fan of that feedback loop. I think schools have learnt over the last 10 or so years how to do it in a much more collegial way. There's been a lot of work looking at how we can come up with better performance evaluation systems that teachers find value to. The answer to that turned out to be pretty simple. If, from the performance evaluation, you are helped to improve, you see that experience as a very valuable experience. That's what I'd be putting the emphasis on—making sure that those observations are improvement opportunities rather than accountability opportunities. I think you'll find that those teachers who are doing a good job are the biggest supporters of that kind of model. So, yes, that feedback loop is pretty critical.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Professor Hattie, thank you for your time and your submission. We are very impressed by your work and certainly use it to inform our work in the Committee. The New South Wales Government is looking to tap into that expertise as well. I was wondering if you could explain a little bit about what your work for them is going to entail.

JOHN HATTIE: Certainly. It's early stages yet. No doubt you've heard the Minister announce they're looking at ways to keep excellent teachers in the classroom and in the profession, and also looking at ways in which they can get those excellent teachers to support other teachers to improve their teaching practice. Part of my role is to help with the advice about the evidence of best practice and what the international community is saying, and looking at what's happening here in Australia with respect to the current highly accomplished and lead teachers, the best in class in New South Wales, and then to help write and work on policy ideas that would go back to the Minister for consideration. That would involve, particularly over the next few weeks, me doing a lot of listening, a lot of talking to people, a lot of understanding about what is happening to come up with that kind of information.

I think it's a really wonderful opportunity because my mission in life is to reintroduce the word "expertise" into the teaching profession. I think this is a really excellent way in which we can have that discussion about how you do it. I'm not pretending it's easy. There is not a whiff of performance pay, which has never worked in our profession. But there is expertise that we have and what drives me is that I see so much expertise, and it gets hidden. A lot of the issues that are raised in education—sometimes very real issues that come up—hide that expertise. So how do we emerge it? How do we do that? Then the other part of it, which I know is part of your

terms of reference—I asked the question, "Who is responsible for esteeming the profession across Australia?" I can't find the answer to that easily. I think there is a major issue here. If we can focus on the expertise that we have, that will make ways to improve the esteem of teachers so much more effective.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This Committee in its very first inquiry recommended the expansion of the HALT program, which we really liked the idea of. Obviously we've seen that be quite successful in other jurisdictions like Singapore, but it has not been effectively used, certainly, in New South Wales. We got figures earlier today and it said that there was, I think, eight accredited this year, nine the year before and 12 the year before that. They're clearly far too low. Do you have a specific terms of reference, Professor Hattie? You said it's still in the early stages.

JOHN HATTIE: Yes. I'll know more on Thursday and Friday, when I come up to Sydney, in terms of the specifics. But you're right in terms of the HALT numbers—288 in New South Wales, 0.3 per cent of the profession. As I talk to many Ministers, in my own analysis, it should be more like 10 per cent. We're miles away.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think you're spot on, Professor Hattie. In terms of the time frame, I think it was reported that you're looking at doing a policy paper and reporting back to the government later this year. Is that correct?

JOHN HATTIE: Correct. Very soon, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you have a figure in mind? It was publicly reported that you would look at paying teachers about $130,000. Do you have a particular figure in mind?

JOHN HATTIE: Relative to their current salaries, that's a much higher figure than their current salaries, and this is the figure that has come out of New South Wales. And they're looking at at least 2,500 HALTs, which is almost 2,000 more HALTs than you have now within the next four or five years. I certainly think that's attainable. I think it's going to require some work and it's going to require some consideration. I think there are credible opportunities to look at specialisms within HALTs and look at collegial ways that people could put in applications for HALTs. I think that there is a lot we can learn from Best in Class how to do this. And I think that, as I mentioned earlier, this is not the time to blink on quality because I think the quality is there.

But there's another big issue too in this area in that there are no roles for HALTs. It's not built into the current system. Initially, it was set up as a way of acknowledging the esteem, but as I talked to the HALTs—and I meet with them every year, across the country—they are very keen to serve and work with others, not only in their school but across schools. So one of the things that certainly I'll be looking at as part of the work with New South Wales is the potential roles. When you look in a current school at the moment, there are many people, in many roles, that may or may not be the most experienced teachers. Some of the experienced expert teachers may prefer just to stay in the classroom. So I think how you work out what these potential roles are is also pretty critical to solving this problem.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think that's an excellent point, that there is no actual role for HALTs in the system. It has kind of been plonked on top as a nice idea but not actually integrated through our schools. I think that's an excellent point. To move to a slightly different issue, one of the proposals that was put before us yesterday by Alphacrucis college was an idea. They're working on an MBA specifically for education. This is designed for people who actually do want to progress into a leadership role as an AP or a DP or as a principal, eventually. But the idea of giving them some specific leadership training in education—what do you think about that?

JOHN HATTIE: With respect, there are probably 10,000 of those programs around the world at the moment. I know many places have tried a straight MBA, and it hasn't worked as the magic answer. Don't get me wrong, I'm a great fan that there is preparation that needs to be done for these roles. But let me take you to a slightly different point here. At the moment, in Australia, we have professional standards for teachers and we have a professional standard for a leader. We have nothing in between. One of the tasks that's being debated around the country at the moment, and that we've been tasked with, is looking at that overlap about what the roles are and what the standards are for those who are becoming leaders. I think this is a very healthy move. I quite frankly don't understand why we have four levels for teachers and only one for principals. Surely there are levels of being a principal in terms of the gradation of your expertise. I think that would be a very healthy move if we moved down that route. And if we did that, I think it would give a lot more clarity to the nature of the education and the professional development that leads to this. And Alphacrucis and other places who are offering these programs can anchor in it more.

Here is the problem I've seen so often: We have some excellent teachers, we have some excellent school leaders, but sometimes they struggle with thinking about how they would provide evidence of their impact. That's where the universities could be particularly helpful to having that debate, because when you provide evidence of

your impact about your role as a parliamentarian, you can convince yourself, but it's harder to know how you convince others. That's one of the problems in our teaching profession—often as it's a very lonely profession—that that debate doesn't happen as often. If courses are run around that notion of evidencing impact and evidencing expertise, I think the tertiaries could play a really important role here.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That's a really interesting idea. Sorry, I should just be clear that the MBA that they were proposing was specifically for education. So the idea is that there would be a leadership program designed for teachers who actually do want to take on a leadership role in education and how they could marry that together, which I think is a really interesting idea, especially given that I think it's really interesting when you said that they stay because of the students but they leave because of the leaders. That's really what we need to address, and that crucial role of principals in providing that leadership for teachers.

I've just got one final question for you, and then I will pass to my colleagues. We've got LANTITE, which tests that teachers have the theory behind what they should have learnt at university. But, fundamentally, whether someone is going to be a good teacher or not is actually going to be determined by their ability to teach—to be able to do the craft of teaching well. But we don't really have a way of testing that at the conclusion of a university degree. How do you think that we could make sure that, in the same way that we want our teachers to be excellent at theory, they've actually got an understanding of the teaching craft? Because it strikes me that this is one of the few things that you pop out at the end of four years of teaching and we close you off in a classroom and often leave you to your own devices without providing you that particular support, and surely that would be a reason why new teachers would be leaving as well.

JOHN HATTIE: Well, I have good news for you. The 2014 TEMAG report came out with many recommendations, and I think one of the most powerful that came out of that was the development of teaching performance assessments. That now is in place. Of the 48 institutions across Australia, they all have teaching performance assessments. But in even better news, all but eight—all the others—are part of a consortium. For example, there's one based at the Australian Catholic University with, I think, about 18 different universities. The one based at the University of Melbourne has about 17 universities who collectively set the standards for each other. They then do a standard-setting evaluation across the institutions based on performance assessments that each of the students submit to their universities. So I would argue there is an assessment now, for the first time in Australia. In fact, it's kind of ironic. For the first time we have some common assessment across universities, and we have universities working across institutions, setting the standards to attain success at being classroom ready.

I think there are some issues with it, and the recent QITE review pointed to some of those that we do need to improve—that cross-moderation system and have national quality assurance. To demonstrate that, we have some excellent teacher education programs and some excellent graduates. I know from it being in place now for about four years that some institutions have dramatically improved as a consequence of the evidence from their teaching performance evaluations. I think it's a very, very healthy move. So, no, there is a procedure now for doing this. I do think it needs to be fixed to get it absolutely correct. But I do think it can give a lot more confidence that when students are leaving the teacher education institutions, besides their training, besides their theory, besides their LANTITE, there is evidence that they are classroom ready.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thanks very much, Professor Hattie. I've got a few other questions, but I might pass to my colleagues and if we have more time at the end, then we'll come back to them.

The ACTING CHAIR: I'll actually take up that point from the Hon. Courtney Houssos there. In your submission you talk about some of the flexible teaching arrangements and initial teacher education arrangements and how they effectively get teachers more classroom ready as well. I just wanted to pick your brain in terms of what that did in terms of keeping retention of teachers in the early years in particular.

JOHN HATTIE: As Mr Latham said earlier, the figures, particularly for the postgraduate course, have been declining over the last few years, primarily because students who are 26 and 27 aren't prepared to give up two years of full-time earnings. So there was a move to look at more what people call the apprenticeship model. But I think the most exciting thing has happened in the last couple of years—started in Victoria, it has now moved to New South Wales and Queensland—is the procurement model. This model was where the, for instance, in your State and in my State, the State government puts out a bid and institutions apply for it. That, I think, gives them much more control and oversight and involvement in teacher education than any State has ever had before. People are then selected by the institution, but then they're placed by the government into sometimes hard-to-teach schools, sometimes in schools in need.

Now, the early criticism is this is unfair, but the hardcore reality is that's where a majority of the graduating students go anyway. Then they're given support by the Teacher Education Institute and by the school they're working in to work 50 or 60 per cent of the time as a teacher. I want to go a step further. I think there's a serious problem with induction once they finish the course. Across the world, there is no organisation, there is no

professional organisation, there is no journal and there are no conferences that are dedicated to induction. It happens by chance.

We know from our [inaudible] work that 95 per cent of principals claim they have an excellent induction program, which less than 40 per cent of the teachers know about. I think if the tertiary institutions could find ways, encouraged and financed, to follow their students for their first two years, we could reduce that induction problem. We could demonstrate to the ITE institutions exactly what they need to do to prepare their students to be classroom-ready. I think we can find a way to much better prepare those teachers in the early years where it can be extremely difficult for them to master the workload, to work out what it means to be a teacher and to work out that whole professional identity of being a teacher.

So these procurement models which have recently started, I have a lot of hope that as they get in place—because the State governments realise they have a lot more power over what happens to the students in that second year or maybe the final year of a four-year degree—for the first time, for example, organisations like yourselves can have a say, where previously, because universities are federally funded, you've had less say of what happens in those courses. I think they're very powerful. I do want to point out they're not for all students; they're not for all schools. So choosing and getting that right is pretty critical, and selection is pretty powerful.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Professor Hattie. I want to thank you for your submission to the inquiry as well. I think it is effectively a step-by-step submission for us to go through all of the stages of that life cycle of teaching and what we can do in each area to be able to improve teacher retention and attraction. In terms of those stages of the life cycle, which one do you think has changed the most in recent years and which needs most focus from the State Government, so to speak, at addressing some of those challenges?

JOHN HATTIE: I think if you asked any teacher who has got 10 years' experience out, "How did you become a great teacher?" they would answer because of what they did themselves. If a teacher spent $100,000 of their own money to improve the nature of their teaching, other than family, who would notice? Teaching has been a lonely profession. It has been an individual profession where they have been, in a sense, independent contractors. People coming into the profession today don't want to do that. They've been brought up in a society where they're very collegial. They're very community-based. They want to work in teams. They want to work in groups. That's the biggest issue facing our profession as we move forward. If we don't solve that problem, we cannot afford to have a profession of lonely individuals, no matter how expert they are, moving forward. That first five or 10 years where they're desperately keen to be collegial, that has to be solved, otherwise I think we're going to find an even greater exodus from our profession than we've ever seen.

The ACTING CHAIR: If I remember some of your reflections—and maybe not from you directly to the inquiry but from others in our inquiry—into the outcomes-based budgeting and effective models in terms of education, I know that the co-teaching model, I think I remember from that one, was one that didn't have a high efficacy rating at that stage as well. That, I take it, is not really a model for addressing that collegiality either, is it, in the space?

JOHN HATTIE: Well, I've got to be careful there. Co-teaching has a very low effect size because it hardly happens. You get two teachers in a room, and one teacher does something and one teacher does something differently elsewhere. But if you have many of the current innovative learning environments where you've got 100 students in the class and three teachers, then you can find incredibly high effects from that because those teachers are forced to work together. They're forced to critique each other; they're forced to improve each other. So those kind of models, I would argue, are very successful.

Now, they're not loved by all, but the evidence from the co-teaching is low often because it isn't co-teaching at all; it just happens to be two teachers who share a classroom. But when they do share, critique, how they do work in teams—and this goes back to the point that was raised earlier. That reflects dramatically on the ability of the principals and the school leaders to create that collegial environment within the school, and you can do that extremely well. It costs, because you have to find time for those teachers to work with each other in the same classroom. You don't have to have all of them in a class of 100 kids and three teachers. That whole notion of collegiality, I think, is a really critical thing we need to solve to attract people to stay in the profession, to build the expertise and to maximise the impact on our kids.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Thank you, Professor Hattie, for your attendance. It has been much anticipated by this Committee. We have all been exposed to the legend of John Hattie, and he is much cited in this forum by many stakeholders. I suppose I wanted to turn to that, because I thought your observations just about co-teaching sort of illustrate a concern that I have about your work. That is that it's much cited, and it's much relied on. It's treated as gospel. I think the comments about the effects of co-teaching are indicative that there's a lot more nuance there in your observations that often means that Hattie is used and abused and relied on to justify

certain practices. I wanted to ask you to make some comments about that, given your academic status. Do you feel uncomfortable with the use of your work in certain contexts?

JOHN HATTIE: With respect, I could spend my whole academic life and no-one could care. The fact that people care is kind of humbling and wonderful. I have the world's best critics, no question. As an academic, that's what keeps you going. Yes, I do get misinterpreted, I do get misquoted, and I do take responsibility for that. That's why I've written 60-odd books on visible learning over the last 10 years, not that anyone notices because they always go back to that original one and pick out some bits they like and they don't like. About three or four years ago, I found about a hundred different criticisms of my work , and I wrote a document querying those. Some I agree with, and I have changed my mind. Many of them are totally a misunderstanding. Many of them reflect that they never ever opened any of the books, but that's okay. Criticism is what thrives us in this business.

But, yes, I think sometimes I'm sceptical about things that I've been claimed to have said. I'm certainly distraught when people take my work, particularly PowerPoints. They include their own materials on it, completely contradictory, and put it up with my name on it. That's the price I pay, but that's why I'm ever vigilant. In fact, I'm in the final processes—hopefully today or tomorrow—of finishing a sequel to the 2008 book, updating it to 350 influences around 400 million kids. I know it's going to create another set of misunderstandings.

So I welcome that you've given me the opportunity to say what I think, correct any of these comments, but, in general, I think most have got the work right. I think 10, 20 years ago schools would not have used evidence. They were just seen as something you do in university. That has changed dramatically, not just because of what I have done but many have done. I think that's a very healthy move to the future. I would hope departments and systems use a lot more evidence than they've ever done before. In that sense, I do pay that price, but the benefits from it, I think, are much greater than that. If there are any particular things you raise—often it is about the detail—I am happy to do that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I do want to kind of raise one issue. Obviously, one of your key findings is that teacher quality is the greatest in-school effect.

JOHN HATTIE: Correct.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: To a certain extent, that has created this narrative in the public debate around trying to improve teacher quality. In some respects, it sends a message to our existing teacher workforce that they're inadequate or that they're not up to scratch. I suppose the other thing that it has contributed to is an increasing pressure from policymakers to micromanage teachers' work in schools. A lot of the pressure, the work intensification, is being derived from the system level—accountability requirements directed towards raising teacher quality. Do you take some responsibility for that work intensification that has flowed from the use of your work to place this additional pressure on teachers?

JOHN HATTIE: Firstly, to go back to your first comment that the biggest in-school effect is teacher quality, I don't see how you could possibly draw a line from that to say that therefore teaching quality is low. It doesn't work that way. The biggest issue is the within-school variance among teacher impact—much greater than our between-school impact—but that means that there is variance. There is variance between extremely excellent and not-so-excellent teachers. Certainly what drives me as I travel the world now—both Australia and around the world—is I see so many excellent teachers out there in the system. The fact that the focus is on teacher quality, you can turn it on its head and say, "Isn't it wonderful that we're getting the impacts we are in our school system as majorly a function of quality teaching?"

I would question your assumption that because my work has highlighted teacher quality, ergo that means that quality isn't good. That's just not the case. Could it be better? Yes, we always want to improve every teacher. To the second part on micromanagement, the good news for me there is certainly—I've just spent the last three weeks in the US in many schools and I've been in England and many parts of the world where they have a lot more micromanagement than you've ever seen here in Australia. I'm not a great fan of over-micromanagement because I think it takes away the kind of expertise that we want. In my jargon, sir, it's all about that evaluative thinking—how you make evaluative judgments in the moment, in the classroom—that really matter. Micromanagement can get in the way of that.

Yes, if you look at our curriculum—3,000 pages compared to the New Zealand curriculum of 69 pages—that is micromanagement. But the good news about that is that there's not much out there about how to implement it. That's left to the school, which I think puts an incredible extra burden on schools compared to that. On lesson planning, thousands and thousands of hours are spent every night by thousands of teachers in Australia reconstructing lesson planning, and there's not a lot of evidence on that. I think that's something that we should fix. When I come back and look at what you're saying, no, I don't agree that my work has led to a focus on low quality. I think I would like to argue it's the opposite. I'm wanting to recognise the high quality and drive everybody

up. Secondly, is it micromanagement? In some schools it can be. Those are the schools where we do have problems with leaders. In most schools I've worked with, it's building teams, it's building colleagues, it's building a system of leaders where they're first amongst equals. That has been part of the success of it.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Just on that question of leadership, you made an observation about the misalignment between HALTs and the position structures in schools. I note that for some time in New South Wales we had instructional leader positions that have been created that sat separately from the HALT process. Recently the Government has created a whole host of new assistant principals of curriculum instruction and supplanted those instructional leaders. Isn't the salary recognition that you're looking for, in terms of acknowledging pedagogical leadership, being reflected already in that initiative that the Government has taken around creating these APC&I positions? And doesn't that then render the HALT process sort of duplicative and unnecessary in creating expectations around a position that structurally has no role and is unlikely to be accommodated within the structure in any meaningful way?

JOHN HATTIE: That's an excellent point that we certainly have to consider as we work ahead on the policy work at the moment. Yes, we have got many of those people in those roles. The dilemma that arises is that many of our excellent teachers also want to stay in the classroom. This is why I use the word "role" in the plural, deliberately. There are roles; there is no one role. Maybe we have to find ways for our most excellent teachers who want to stay in the classroom to be similarly rewarded. On the other hand, as I mentioned before, when you speak to them, the majority overwhelmingly want to take on other roles. So you're right: How we take those many roles that we've created, plus looking at those teachers who want to stay in the classroom—who may have lesser than a full-time or a major role—how we work through that over the next few weeks is going to be pretty critical to work out. Yes, we don't want to make it a whole new system that mirrors, stands alongside our current system. It has to be built into it. That's going to be part of if we're successful or not.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I have one more question and then I'll finish up. I wanted to invite you to perhaps correct your earlier evidence. You said some statistics about workload that really suggested that the workload issue really wasn't a major concern, in spite of the fact that what teachers are telling us, what the vast majority of submissions around the reason why teachers are leaving the system is suggesting, is that workload and the time constraints that teachers are operating under are a dominant reason for dissatisfaction with the job, with the profession. I'm not sure whether that was your intention, but it certainly sounded like you were downplaying the workload factor. I wonder whether that's actually what you intended?

JOHN HATTIE: I'm certainly trying to say that we need to be careful when we look at workload, yes. People who are in the profession do claim a major workload. Take the annual survey that comes out about principals. It's always high workload, high stress. Then I counter that by looking at the TALIS results that said 95 per cent of Australian principals think being a principal is an excellent job and they would recommend it to others. How do you resolve that, sir? I think the resolution of that is in coping strategies. Our principals in Australia have probably the best coping strategies for dealing with workload and stress of any principals around the world.

Similarly in schools, many of our teachers have high workloads and they have coping strategies. Can we help them to make it better? No question we can. Now, I put it to you: I'm struggling to find the evidence that, for those who leave compared to those who stay, it's a function of workload. Those who stay also complain about the workload. I'm arguing that that may not be the major reason for leaving. The major reason for leaving, at least from the work that we've been doing, is to do with leadership, being assigned positions that you're not comfortable with and not getting promoted, not getting recognition and not—going back to Mr Latham's point earlier—being recognised for the expertise you have. So am I downplaying workload? No, I think it's an issue anyway, but I'm not sure it's a major issue in terms of whether people stay or leave.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: In your opening remarks you acknowledged the changing nature of the role and that it's more about retention and attraction. You said something about a working group evidence base. I wanted to talk to you about the working group. We know from media—and you've said it on page 7—that it's dominated by a pessimistic narrative. With the working group, what would be the life span of the working group? Would that introduce another layer of uncertainty to the teacher's perception of their role? Generally they don't feel appreciated, so would this add to that? Who would be represented on the working group? And how would it assist in developing a workload model?

JOHN HATTIE: Starting with your premise, you're right that teachers don't feel that they are esteemed, which is quite contrary to the recent Morgan poll, which ranked teachers as fourth in esteem, and 93 per cent of the public felt teachers were trusted and are worthwhile. So, yes, there is a perception difference there on that. But then coming to your specific notion, there are two or three major issues that I think are national; I don't think it's just a State issue. I raise this because of the incredible mobility now, we're in the online programs, et cetera. It's not just a State issue about quality assurance, about assuring that, for instance, the HALT model—which is a

national model—making sure that we get the quality assurance right on that, whether HALTs is the only answer, whether it's best in class, whether it's level 3 in west Australia, whether it's learning specialists in Victoria. How do we get a national understanding of quality? Similarly, when we raised earlier the issue of teaching performance assessments, of teacher education, is there a national understanding of quality?

This is separate from a registration issue. I'm not suggesting for a moment that there be a national registration board, even though I know it's been recommended by many. It's not something I think I'd want to argue for at this stage, because I think the registration boards are doing a great job as they are. But there is an issue about quality. One of the issues that we haven't raised here this afternoon is it's not easy to recognise excellence amongst teachers. I think it can be done. I think it is being done. I don't think there's one right way. I think there are multiple ways. I think then there are ways to do it.

Then the second part is making sure that you get to the right standard, using those different methods. This is where a national quality assurance group that also have a responsibility for answering the question I raised earlier—who's responsible for raising the esteem of teachers across Australia? It seems that every time someone's given it, we back off and we go into other notions. For instance, England set up in the 1990s a TBA. I can't remember what the acronym stood for now. Ralph Tabbera headed it. They had a marvellous campaign of attracting people into the teaching profession and esteeming the nature of teaching. I think we can learn a lot from that. It's not an easy task to do. This is what I'm talking about by some kind of national quality assurance group.

I think the other part of that, which is happening in a way across Australia at the moment, is getting much better information about workforce supply and demand figures. We're pretty good at the supply side. We're not so good at getting the demand data at the moment. That's working quite well at the moment through the ATWD, which AITSL as the secretariat do. I can see a similar national quality assurance group headed by a ministerial council, which perhaps AITSL could be the secretariat to, that could raise the issue of quality, making sure that it's there, it's present and those many, many teachers and leaders in our current system and teacher education programs in our current system that meet those standards of excellence—that's what should drive the conversation. We are very good in education at finding problems and fixing them. We are not very good at finding excellence and scaling it.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I have a question about retention and also attraction. I might get in trouble because I don't know the answer to this. How do we compare with our retention to other States? What are we doing different, if there is a difference?

JOHN HATTIE: It's fascinating. Retention data is one of the hardest sets of data to get in Australia. It's slowly coming forward. There is an attrition out of teaching in the first five years, not as much as many would argue. One of our problems is that we keep asking the wrong question. We keep asking, "Do you intend to stay in the profession or not?" Obviously, every teacher and school leader in the last 10 years of their careers say, no, they don't intend, because they're going to retire. Some intend to leave but don't. There's very little correlation between their intention and their behaviour. So if you look at the intention statistics, you get a very warped and, I think, skewed view of what's happening. If you can get the retention data itself—which we're struggling to get—it's not as dramatic as many would argue. It's certainly a cause for worry, particularly those who do leave the profession and who we'd want to retain.

The other problem we have is that a lot of people leave the government system and go into the Catholic system. That's not tracked. Or they leave a school and they go into a Department of Education, into a NESA or whatever. That's not tracked. So, at this stage, to answer your question about actual attrition, I have to confess, for a person who loves numbers, it's very, very hard to put fingers on. Are you that different from other States? The limited data we've seen in the ATWD says, no, it's not that different. Got to be careful here. Northern Territory stands out for other reasons because they're rural and remote. But compared to other States, like Queensland and Victoria, as far as I can see, not that different.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I might just try one more quickly if I've got enough reception. It's about attraction. Everywhere I go, be it a shearing shed, a pub or a school or a hospital, everyone wants more staff. Where are the people that we want to attract into this profession at the moment? Where would we get them from?

JOHN HATTIE: Firstly, when we look at those that are already registered—I picked those numbers up this morning somewhere. Let me see if I can find them here. In New South Wales, you have a register. I'm sorry, I'm just not quick enough to find my notes here. But we know that 21 per cent of teachers on the various registers are not teaching at the moment and only 59 per cent of those on the register are practising teaching. Obviously there's school leaders and other things. There is a cohort of people who have been teachers that are still registered that we could attract to come back. I note, for example, during COVID both your State and my State employed many of the supply relief teachers to become coaches. That in many ways dried up the relief and teachers, which has led, I think, to the major problems we're having at the moment in finding teachers.

I think there is a cohort of people out there that have been registered, have been teachers, that we should be finding ways to attract back into the profession. They don't all want to come back and do a five-day-a-week job. They want to have shorter term, for all kinds of reasons. As I said earlier, we do have 90,000 in the teacher education programs. Obviously we've been reasonably successful at attracting them—not always, for example, into the two-year program, but to many of the programs. But we're not very good at retaining them.

I think that the other issue that we need to raise seriously is convincing teachers that teaching is a pretty good job, so they communicate that to their students. That's one of the toughest barriers to getting into the teaching profession at the moment. I look at the moment at the TALIS studies on principals. Ninety-five per cent would recommend it to other people to become a principal. I think there's a lot of work we should be doing with teachers to make them the best advertisements for becoming a teacher, particularly those HALTs, those highly accomplished, those best in class. They're doing a stunning job. Going back to an earlier statement, if every now and then we stopped and told them that they're doing a stunning job, maybe we could start to turn this problem around.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much, Professor Hattie. On that note it's a good time for us to end. That brings your session this afternoon with us to a close. I thank you very much for being so generous with your time in appearing before this inquiry and the submission you've made. If there were any questions you took on notice—I don't recall there being any—you've got 21 days to answer those. As well, members of the Committee may put forward questions on notice in writing to you for your response following the Committee hearing. That brings our hearing for today to a close. Thank you, everyone, for joining us.

(The witness withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 15:31.